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


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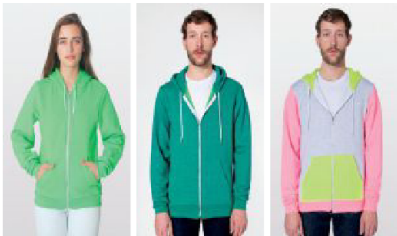
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


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Embroidery's Voice & Vision

March/April 2013

Dive In!

On-location with
the season's
hottest
swimwear

Hot Hue

Aquamarine hits
the runways

Appliqué Update

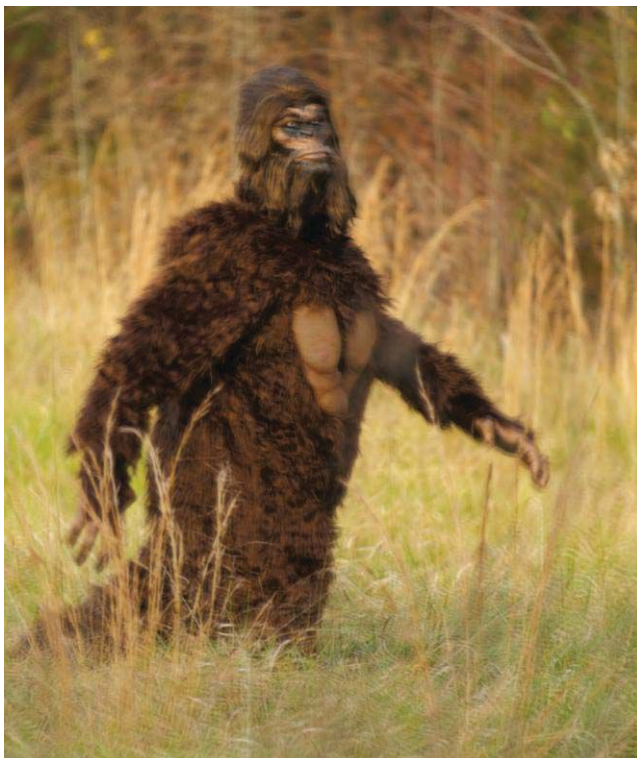
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+ Ask an Expert: Bringing Digitizing In-house

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- Fine Jersey
- 2456 / Unisex
- 23 Colors Available



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- TR456 / Unisex
- 8 Colors Available



- Sheer Jersey
- 6456 / Unisex
- 22 Colors Available



Adult L/S V-Neck

- Tri-Blend
- TR476 / Unisex
- 3 Colors Available



Kids & Youth S/S V-Necks

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- TR256 / Youth
- 4 Colors Available



- Fine Jersey
- 2256 / Youth
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- Tri-Blend
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- Fine Jersey
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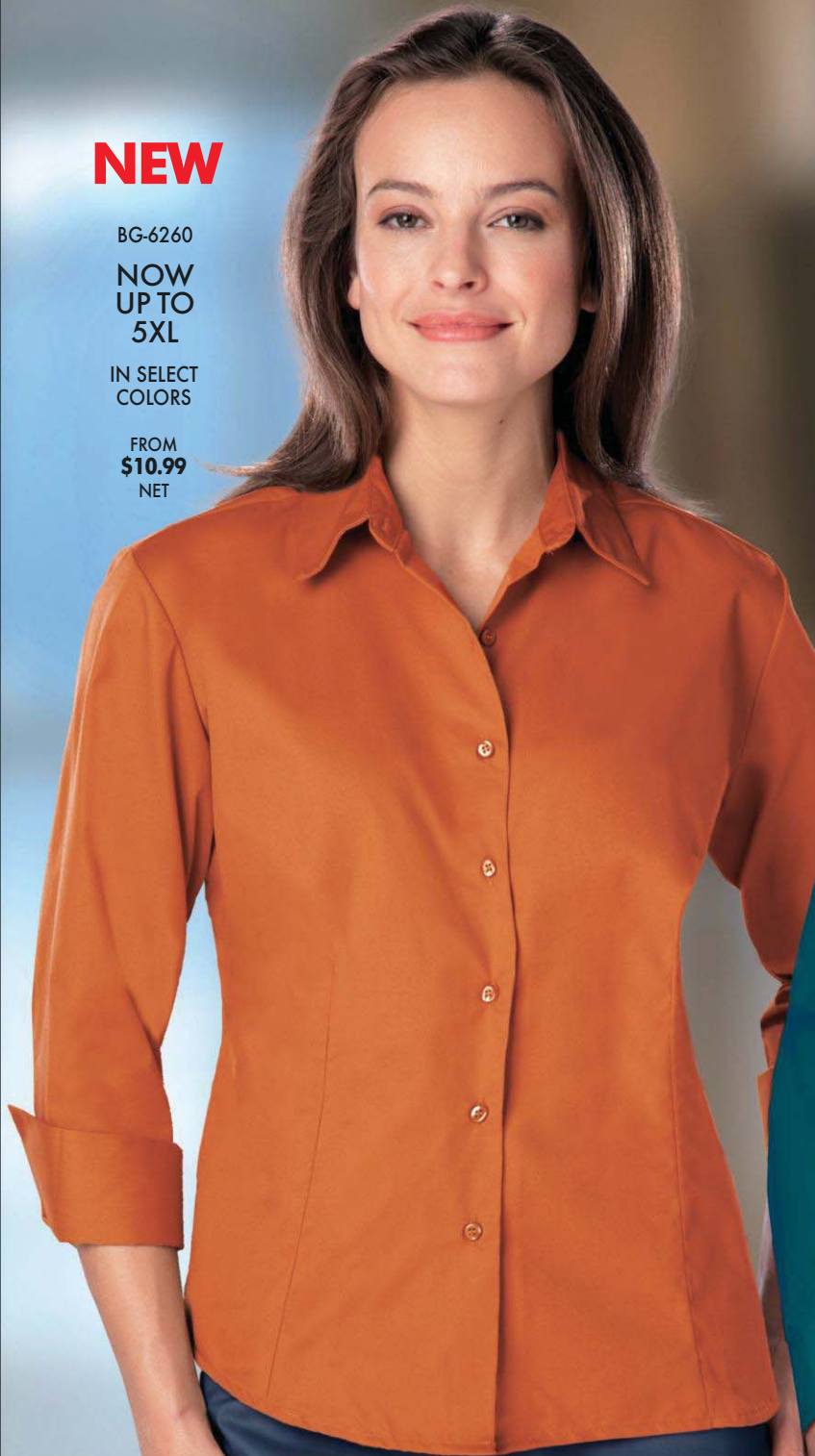
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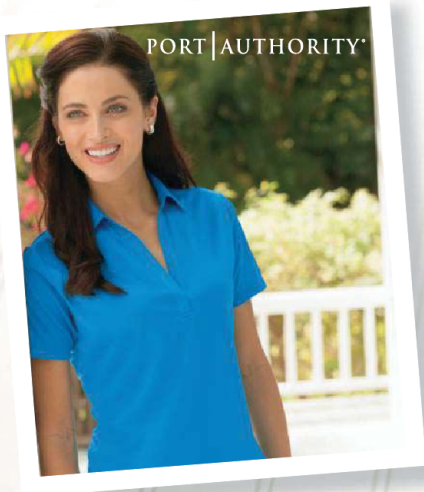
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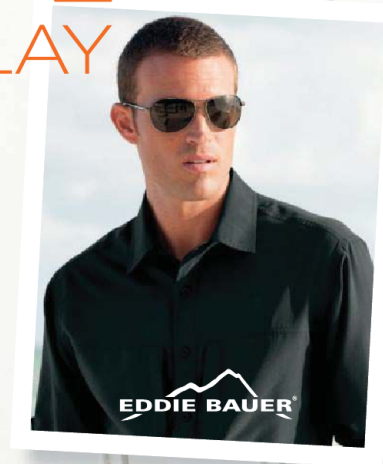
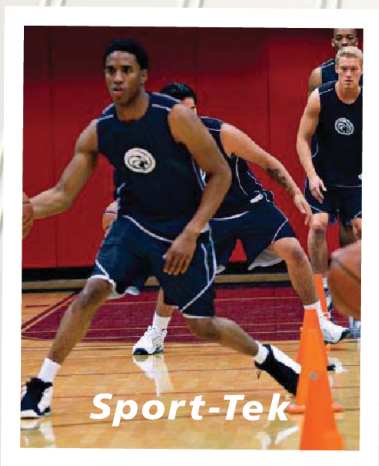
An expert explains how to hire your first in-house digitizer.

About the Cover:
Photography: Andrew Milne
On location at The Peabody Orlando Hotel
Model: Meredith B. Slate Model and Talent
On model: Triangle bikini top (2511) and Brazilian-cut bottom (4716), both in Blu Cina, available from Lori Coulter Made-to-Order Swimwear (Circle 151 on Free Info Card)
Hair and makeup: Summer
Design: Jim Lang



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In this issue's "Expert Weigh-In" in our new "Interact" department, we chat with **CHRISTOPHER BERNAT**, chief revenue officer at Vapor Apparel (*asi/93396*). Bernat says that polyester is spurring sublimation's growing popularity. "Much of sublimation's growth is being driven by a renaissance in the demand for polyester materials," he says. "Athletic fabrics are entering many new markets and sublimation will benefit from that. Customization will continue to be a big driver of this. Look for screen printers to really make a move into sublimation. Also, look for larger companies like Epson to enter the market with long-term players."

In this issue's "Ask An Expert," **ERICH CAMPBELL**, e-commerce manager and digitizer for Albuquerque, NM-based Black Duck Inc., tackles a top shop owner dilemma: I'm ready to hire an in-house digitizer, but I have no idea how to start looking for the right candidate. "Start with the practical: How much experience does your candidate have in the industry?" he writes. "How long has he digitized? Has she ever operated commercial embroidery machines for production? Is your prospect familiar with the sort of software you have or are willing to purchase?" Campbell covers all of the practical and artistic considerations you should keep in mind when you're ready to hire your first digitizer.



In this month's "World" section of our new "News" department, **DEBORAH JONES**, owner of MyEmbroideryMentor.com, writes about her recent trip to Turkey with a textile expert to learn about the art of embroidery and needlecrafts of nomadic tribal people. "We saw antique urban embroidery, including outstanding embroidered cloths called suzanis and elaborately stitched men's robes called chapans," she tells us. "Tribal items included headwear, children's garments, animal coverings and practical items for use in the home. Many garments and almost every textile used in the home are highly decorated, and some of the stitches are so incredibly fine that it's hard to believe there could possibly be needles that small." Plus, see photos of Jones' trip.



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New For Spring



They say spring is the time for new beginnings, and that's certainly the case here at *Stitches* magazine. For starters, my husband Grant and I are thrilled to welcome a new addition to our family: Zachary Grant Rollender was born January 25, and though he surprised us with an early arrival, he's doing great.

But that's not the only big news around here: We've given *Stitches* its own makeover just in time for spring. In the past several months, I challenged *Stitches*' Art Director Hillary Haight, along with Creative Director Jim Lang, to give *Stitches* a fresh new look, with more appealing graphics, additional white space and a better flow.

With this issue, I think they've accomplished that, and more. While you'll recognize the same great content, I believe the newly-refreshed *Stitches* has a cleaner and more sophisticated look. Sections are easier to locate (thanks to the large colored "dots" Hillary has placed at the beginning of each one); intricate designs are given more space (so you can really see clearly how they were created); and sections like "News" are boiled down into more digestible pieces.

You'll find a few great surprises as well. My favorite: The new "Interact" section, which showcases the conversations you and your peers are having with *Stitches*, and each other, on *Stitches.com*, Facebook and other social media outlets. There's even a new page devoted to our Pinterest site, which showcases cool designs created by readers like you. *Stitches*' readers have always had a strong voice within the magazine, and now we've brought that voice to life even more with this new section, which begins on page 14.

Before we brought this issue to life, we shared sample pages with many members of our *Stitches* Advisory Board, and I want to thank them for their valuable feedback.

I'd love to hear from you as well. What's your favorite part of the redesign? What more could we do to help *Stitches* deliver on its promise – to serve as Embroidery's Voice & Vision – in every single issue?

Send me an e-mail, or connect with me via social media, and let me know what you think. Enjoy the issue!

Nicole M. Rollender

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INTERACT

Compiled by Sara Lavenduski and Andraya Vantrease

STITCHES.COM



Get Your Stitch Report

Stitches Staff Writer Chris Ruvo talks about some of the most popular appliqué techniques decorators are creating for clients today, and easy tips on how you can get started with appliqué in *Stitches'* video series,

"The Stitch Report," which gives you some of the latest trends here and abroad in the embroidery industry.

Win More Sports Business

Score! Ready to grab more sports business? Try pitching to lacrosse teams. Visit *Stitches.com* to learn how to start supplying team wear and other logoed apparel and goods to the fastest-growing sports in the U.S. Plus,

get the top 10 items lacrosse teams are buying.

Podcast: SEO Smarts



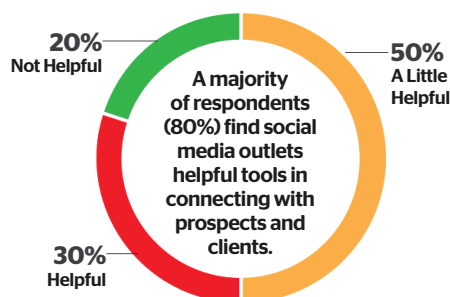
Just what makes a SEO maven tick? Chris Ruvo interviews

Kent, OH-based NNEP (asi/187622) President Jennifer Cox about how shops can improve their website's ranking in online search results.

INDUSTRY POLL

In a recent poll on *Stitches.com*, we asked:

Do you find social media helpful, not helpful or a little helpful when it comes to engaging clients and connecting with new potential customers?



BLOG EXCERPT

On Links and Needles Embroidery Digitizers: Be the Operator



It's easy to forget at times, particularly for those of us who have embroidery departments (or client companies) supporting them who dutifully run samples and attend to the business of decoration, that we aren't simply designers or interpreters of design, but that we're tasked with the control of a complex and sensitive machine. We focus on the look we're meant to achieve, and though the best of us concentrate on pathing, even then, we can become lax – cutting corners in our execution, using faster digitizing methods when what we need is more control. We can ignore the machine in order to serve our own busy schedules, giving up precision for speed, thereby ensuring that our quality never breaches the boundary between sufficiency and excellence.

What we need is to get back to our machines. If you're a freelance digitizer and have no machine, partner with a local embroiderer who does. If you're in-house and have been locked away from production, ask for some unstructured (even unpaid, if you have to) time on a machine for sampling. You need to run your designs.

Scan this QR code to read the entire blog entry by Black Duck Inc.'s Erich Campbell.



SOCIAL FEEDS



Facebook Fans React We posted:

What fashion designer who's using embellishment is on your "s/he inspires me" list?

You answered:

GARRETT KAULE
Marc Ecko really got me inspired to start apparel decorating. The simulated stitch prints, high-density and embroidery are all things I've never seen before. Always a step ahead!

AMANDA MAXWELL LIGHTFOOT

I get inspiration from the designers of theater and TV show costumes, including *Downton Abbey* and *Once Upon A Time*.

MICHAEL S. SAVOIA
Oscar de la Renta. Going into his boutiques is always an inspiration. He has a special style of beautiful embellishments.

CATHY CATTLE
I look to digitizer Sadia Andrews of Sadia's Design. Her work transforms the everyday, and usually the applications can be used in everything from clothing to cushions to wall hangings, all with the same design. I truly make it a point to follow her creativity!

LAURA JASTRZEMSKI
To be honest, none of them. I enjoy creating my own designs to suit my style or those of my clients. True inspiration comes from the imagination.

BAMBAMS LLC
Dior Couture! Raf Simons, creative director, has done a great job in a short time frame, reintroducing to the House the 1950s Christian Dior look with simple elegant embellishments.



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If you like illumination in painting, this story is for you! Reflections. htnyti.ms/YZyIRz

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Over 2,100 garment workers fainted in 2012: Cambodian union: bit.ly/W52f9S

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From EnMart's Kristine Shreve: How to set New Year's resolutions for your business: bit.ly/XFobFa

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ESP Solutions Inc. just printed new shirts for their employees and valued customers! Hot off the press! <http://fb.me/1RIGMC4zZ>

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Are We Meant to Live on Mars? <http://on.mash.to/Tg9B5G>

@HANES

RT My oldest undies are from ____.

Pinterest

Check out the following designs that we pinned on Stitches' Pinterest page – from the *Cool Embroidery Designs* and *Sequins, Rhinestones & Bling, Oh My!* www.pinterest.com/stitchesmag

From the Board: Cool Embroidery Designs



Cotton flour sack tea towel with chickens. Think Provençal kitchen décor by Megan Boos of Stitch Witch Custom Embroidery in Fortuna, CA



Cotton flour sack tea towel with heart design. Perfect for weddings, anniversaries and Valentine's Day by Megan Boos of Stitch Witch Custom Embroidery in Fortuna, CA



Crossword format design of Michigan teams for a sports enthusiast client by Juanita Jarrett of Silver Screen Embroidery in Lapeer, MI



Pennsylvania Trolley Museum design by Tom Harrold of Small World Fantasies



Old Navy pinstripe jacket embroidered with Wonderland Pack and Kitchen Engravings designs from Urban Threads (www.urbanthreads.com) by Carolyn Cagle of Strikke Knits in Stacy, MN



Drama Queen Tutu Onesie with zebra print lettering and rhinestud tiara by Shell DeHosse of SBS Spirit Wear & Design/Sparkles by Shell in New Eagle, PA

From the Board: Sequins, Rhinestones & Bling, Oh My!



Cheer top by Andrew and Lee Romano Sequeira of Sparkle Plenty Designs (asi/88442) in Philadelphia



Cheer team top by Andrew and Lee Romano Sequeira of Sparkle Plenty Designs (asi/88442) in Philadelphia

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

INTERACT

Letters

LEARN IT LIVE!

Attend "Close Sales On Social Media: Virtual Selling Strategies" on Thursday, May 9, from 11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. at **The ASI Show** New York. In this advanced education session, you'll learn how to expand your selling skills into the online sphere and close more business. Visit **ASIShow.com** to register.

We received these letters in response to the question: What product or service would you like to add to your decorating business in 2013?

Revamped Website

We're in the process of developing a website for our customers to set up samples and order production quickly and easily. The website will allow our customers to design embroidered and sublimated patches, magnetic badges and transfers. We're also working on a method to simplify our sample and production costs so customers know all of the prices upfront and there's no confusion when quoting their end customers.

Erin Gallagher

*World Emblem International
(asi/98264)*

All That And More

We've added a lot of new processes in the past year such as laser apparel, rhinestones, printing up to six colors and an allover press for screen printing. In 2013, we'll focus on promoting the new processes. We'll be doing some work for ourselves and then promoting it to our customers. We'll be truly focused on expanding what

we do with each process and showing off new products that others don't carry. Companies need to focus on making every customer who comes through the door happy all year. If they do that, then they can focus on offering new products to existing customers, and growth happens naturally and easily.

Howard Potter

A&P Master Images

“We're in the process of developing a website for our customers to set up samples and order production quickly and easily.”

Erin Gallagher, World Emblem International (asi/98264)

Direct To You

I currently offer embroidery and sublimation services, and I'd very much like to add direct-to-garment printing to that list this year.

Korinne Hill

Sewin' Time

Sublimation For Versatility

We're adding in-house sublimation printing to our host of services. It makes us more versatile and responsive to customer needs, from those customers wanting high-end performance wear with a light hand in the printing, to those simply needing a single custom garment or promotional

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Adult T-Shirt



42000L Gildan Performance™
Women's T-Shirt



42000B Gildan Performance™
Youth T-Shirt



42400 Gildan Performance™
Adult Long Sleeve T-Shirt



42400L Gildan Performance™
Women's Long Sleeve T-Shirt



42400B Gildan Performance™
Youth Long Sleeve T-Shirt

For complete Gildan Performance™ product information visit mygildan.com

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INTERACT

item. Also, in addition to providing us with a way to tackle high-color, low-quantity printing, the addition of specialty heat presses and online design (also coming in 2013) will allow us to have a complete line not only of custom, small-run garments, but also one-off promotional products for our company stores.

Erich Campbell
Black Duck Inc.

Clear As Crystal

For 2013, we're looking to expand on a product that has been hugely popular around the world: Swarovski crystal body tattoos. These small crystal designs feature a

skin-safe, peel-and-stick temporary adhesive that makes for easy application, with the convenience of one size fits all. The crystals are brilliant

and provide more bling than any other kind of stone.

Andrew Sequeira
Sparkle Plenty Designs
(asi/88442)

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 nroller@ascentral.com.

OOPS...

How I Screwed Up and What I Learned From It



I learned how to line up the needle perfectly into a previously embroidered start spot by wrecking a \$3,000 Belgium white linen duvet cover not once, but twice. The first time I sewed the monogram through all layers, sewing the cover closed. When we got the cover back from the customer to fix it, we took turns taking the threads out without creating holes. Then, we practiced on a scrap to find the start and lined up the first stitch perfectly. Well, except for one thing: We forgot to record the original thread color, which was white, rather than off-white. It was perfectly placed the second time, but still wrong. We took it out again, kept the cover clean by wrapping it in plastic while it rested on the floor, and did it right the third time. We saved the cover but lost the linen store account. I'm now an expert at aligning the first stitch of a redo.

Submitted by Marjorie Corrow, owner of Life's a Stitch Embroidery in Niskayuna, NY; lastitch@nycap.rr.com

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Anvil's Eco Collection offers fashionable eco-friendly tees made of certified organic cotton and recycled P.E.T. polyester blends. With 10 silhouettes, lightweight 100% combed ring spun fabrics and 22 colors including 6 gorgeous heathers, you can easily outfit your entire crew to suit their individual styles.

Anvil Canvas for Self Expression[™]

Earth Day is Monday, April 22nd.

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Doing the right thing rarely is. The word **sustainability** has become an important part of our business as we strive to ensure that we are doing the right thing for our families, community and environment. When you choose our quality products, you help us realize our global commitment to sustainability.



INTERACT

Expert Weigh-In



Christopher Bernat, chief revenue officer at Vapor Apparel (asi/93396), shares his insights on the power of sublimation, hiring the right people and what will drive industry growth in 2013. Contact: chrisb@sourcesubstrates.com.

We see sublimation-specific apparel as a wave of the future.

Prior to starting Vapor Apparel with my partner, Jackson Burnett, I was the director of sales at Sawgrass Technologies, the leader in digital sublimation inks. I was exposed to multiple print technologies and substrates while there. We saw the opportunity to create value in the sublimation space by developing a line of high-quality imprints that were specifically designed for sublimation printing. That was more than 8 ½ years ago and we've never looked back.

Polyester is spurring sublimation's growing popularity.

Much of sublimation's growth is being driven by a renaissance in the demand for polyester materials. Athletic fabrics are entering many new markets and sublimation will benefit from that. Customization will continue to be a big driver of this. Look for screen printers to really make a move into sublimation. Also look for larger companies like Epson to enter the market with long-term players.

We're proud of our decorating division,

which is entering its third full season. Last year, it grew roughly 35% over the prior year. We offer sublimation printing, domestic cut-and-sew sublimation for brands and repeat programs, direct-to-garment for cotton and screen printing. We do a lot of all-over sublimation printing on premade Vapor Apparel garments. Our Rapid Retail Replenishment program allows our customers to offer as few as six per design with a quick turn time.

Keep it real and hire the right people.

A big part of being profitable is making sure you have a reality-based attitude every day and have the right people on your team. When you have the right people – those who have an intense sense of accountability – profitability is easier to achieve. We also work hard to innovate every year.

Innovation, investment and made-in-the-USA goods will determine growth in 2013.

Our main challenge will be to identify the best



This sublimated tee, made from 100% recycled post-industrial/post-consumer material, including 12 water bottles' worth of recycled plastic, was used as the official staff tee for the EcoPrint Berlin Show in 2012. Yarn made by Unifi Corp. and airjet-spun polyester made in Bogota, Colombia. Digitally sublimated at the LEED-certified Vapor Apparel facility in Charleston, SC.

opportunities for innovation and the best places to invest. We also think made-in-the-USA goods will become more attractive. We're very well-positioned for that and are working with large companies in the Southeast to bring textile employment back, on our own terms.

I like to read about historical movers and shakers.

I'm currently reading the Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Andrew Jackson called *American Lion* by Jon Meacham.

Problem Solved

Q *What's an easy way to get started with social networking for a decorating business, and what are three things owners should do in the first month of social media marketing?*



Geri Finio, Studio187.net:

Facebook and LinkedIn are both good places to start. Since I'm working at my computer all day, I can check Facebook and e-mails while sewing out large designs. This allows me to be present on social media without negatively impacting my embroidery production. My clients know they can find me via e-mail or Facebook more easily than by phone because I can't hear the phone ring, let alone carry on a conversation, while the machines are running.

Start a personal Facebook page in addition to a business one to give people the option of "liking" your business page if they think it's valuable and to consistently receive its content in the live stream. Most of my "friends" opt toward my personal page and manually check my business page when they want ideas and inspiration. It's also a great tool to share the new designs and projects that are going on in the industry.

Keep the business page specific to business, but be careful not to sell your wares on it. Mine is used primarily for sharing and posting inspirational embroidery news from other sites, and occasionally projects I'm working on. I invite my customers to post their embroidered items as well.



Steve Freeman, Qdigitizing.com (asi/700501):

My advice would be to contract with a company that specializes in managing social media for small businesses. To social network correctly takes a great deal of time and requires a significant amount of expertise. A good social media manager isn't overly expensive and can be worth her weight in gold. I'd personally recommend Social Focus in Salem, MA: This small firm can be the face of

your network. Just provide guidance and art content.



Deborah Jones, MyEmbroideryMentor.com:

Get a separate device, such as an Apple iPad or Surface tablet, from your regular work computer to handle your social networking. I had been doing sporadic social networking and finally realized I wasn't doing it more frequently because my work computer is often tied up when I have the inspiration to write a blog or give my followers an update. In the first month, you should: establish a routine for checking your social media activity; create a Facebook page for your business; and join LinkedIn.



Howard Potter, A&P Master Images:

Make sure your website is clean to a viewer and promotes you and your customers. Promote your customers to other potential customers. Everyone will grow together. The more stable you all are, the more you'll make together.

Also, have a Facebook page linked to your website. Promote work you're doing, show photos, host giveaways, and give publicity to customers and their events.



Lee Romano Sequeira, Sparkle Plenty Designs (asi/88442):

Start a blog on your niche and begin posting about it; open a Facebook page for your business, not a profile; and begin commenting on other Facebook pages and let the networking commence!

PROBLEM SOLVED

Have a problem you need solved? Send your question for the *Stitches* Editorial Advisory Board to nrollender@asicentral.com.



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INTERACT

Phil Stitch Answers



Got a question for Phil?

If you can't find what you're looking for in the Embroiderers Sourcing Guide, write to: *Stitches*, Attn: Phil Stitch, 4800 Street Rd., Trevoise, 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.

Although I try my best, I can't always answer every request, so please continue your search on your own. Remember, if you contact the companies I mention, tell them you heard about them here!

PS: If you become an ASI Decorator Member with ESP, you'll have access to every item in the wearables and promotional products industry from 3,000+ reputable suppliers. Just call (800) 546-1388 to get started!

I'm trying to locate a layered shirt that looks like a short-sleeve shirt with a long-sleeve shirt underneath.
- Mark

This popular look has just recently surfaced in the industry, and you can find it at Broder Bros. Co. (*asi/42090*); (800) 521-0850; www.broderbros.com. It's a 4.5-oz. jersey cotton shirt, product 3510 – a two-in-one T-shirt available in black/white, deep heather/white, navy/white and white/granite. Also, look for product GTWF from Heritage Sportswear (*asi/60582*); (800) 537-2222; www.heritagesportswear.com.

I have a customer asking about a fleece neck scarf in

safety yellow or Hi-Viz yellow. Got any ideas? - Mike

Don't shield your eyes from product 57005NF from Unionwear (*asi/73775*); (877) 932-7864; www.unionwear.com. It's a polar fleece scarf in high-visibility yellow, perfect for your customer. Other products sure to stand out are S53 and S61 from Country Line Inc. (*asi/46764*); (416) 740-3711; www.countryline.ca. They're both micro fleece scarves that are available in lime green and three shades of yellow.

Sure hope you can help. I'm looking for blank pillowcases that I can embroider on. Do you have a source where I can find different colors and sizes? - Sue

First, rest your head at Wolfmark (*asi/98085*); (920) 886-9227; www.wolfmarkties.com; which carries fleece pillowcases (product VOYPC) in a variety of colors, ready for embroidery. Binaco (*asi/40544*); (714) 256-7770; www.binaline.com; also has a polyester pillowcase, product BL235, that measures 11" by 16" and is available in black, navy, red, pink, green and two shades of gray. If you're into a more classic style, seek out white pillowcases from Country Line Inc. (*asi/46764*); (416) 740-3711; www.countryline.ca; and Boutross Imports (*asi/41299*); (800) 227-7781; www.boutross.com.

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By Christopher Ruvo

Event Calendar

Stitches.com

See a complete industry event calendar.

March 3-6

Marlboro, MA

New England Apparel Club Show

(781) 326-9223;

www.neacshow.com

March 8-10

Atlantic City, NJ

ISS Shows

(800) 974-7916;

www.issshows.com

March 11-15

Minneapolis, Des Moines, Omaha, Kansas City, KS, St. Louis

Advantages Roadshow

(800) 546-3300;

www.advantagesroadshow.com

March 17-18

Syracuse, NY

New England Apparel Club Show

(781) 326-9223;

www.neacshow.com

March 17-20

Boston

Boston Gift Show

(678) 285-3976;

www.bostongiftshow.com

March 22-24

Long Beach, CA

ASI Show

(800) 546-3300;

www.asishow.com

March 24-27

Montreal, QC

Montreal Gift Show

(800) 611-6100;

www.montrealgiftshow.com

Ryonet Acquires Riley Hopkins Screen Printing

Ryonet Corp. (*asi/528500*), a provider of screen-printing equipment and supplies, has acquired Riley Hopkins Screen Printing Machinery LLC.

Based in Gig Harbor, WA, Riley Hopkins has more than 35 years of experience building manual screen-printing presses. The company's plant in Gig Harbor will remain open for manufacturing. Parts and equipment will continue to be sold from that facility and Ryonet locations.

Ryonet is focused on continuing to improve the Riley Hopkins line, with some "very exciting things" already in the works, says founder and CEO Ryan Moor.

Virginia T's Merges With Heritage Sportswear

Apparel supplier Virginia T's (*asi/93917*) and Ohio-based Heritage Sportswear (*asi/60582*) have merged operations. Financial terms

80% The percentage of small to mid-sized businesses that plan to increase their use of social media in 2013.
Source: eMarketer

of the deal weren't disclosed. The merger follows the 2012 purchase of Virginia T's by Chicago-area investor Donald Schumacher, who also owns Heritage. "We'll be able to offer more styles and more colors, and we'll be able to ship quicker," says Cindy Sims, public relations and promotions manager for Heritage.

According to Sims, both Heritage Sportswear and Virginia T's will retain their corporate names and sales teams. Jay Frink, a Virginia T's executive, has been appointed president of the merged company, while Heritage's Jon Hays has been elevated to the position of executive vice president and general manager.

American Apparel Reports Sales Gains

American Apparel (*asi/35297*), the 16th largest supplier in the ad specialty industry according to *Counselor* magazine, has announced that its total 2012 sales were \$616.7 million, an increase of 13%. The company also reported that its wholesale net sales – which include ad specialties – rose 12% last year. "We experienced sales growth in almost all major markets and product categories," says Dov Charney, American Apparel's CEO.

Strengthened by recent changes to its e-commerce operations, Los Angeles-based American Apparel is forecasting continued growth this year. The supplier reported 2011 North American ad specialty sales of \$90.2 million, which represented a 1.8% year-over-year increase.

Broder Starts 2013 With A Bang

Broder Bros. Co. (*asi/42090*) was busy in the early part of 2013. In January, the industry-leading apparel supplier announced several key developments, including the signing of a distribution agreement with Russell Athletic. Broder will now distribute Russell Athletic items within the ad specialty market.

Additionally, Broder hired Dan Pantano as president, a newly created position for the company. Pantano most recently was president of Fisher Scientific.

Beyond the addition to its executive team, Broder also acquired fellow supplier Imprints Wholesale (*asi/62486*).

With North American ad specialty sales of \$483.4 million in 2011, Broder was the largest supplier in the industry, according to *Counselor* and *Stitches* magazines.

\$48.6 BILLION

The revenue e-commerce sales of apparel and accessories are expected to generate in 2013. That number could rise to \$73 billion by 2016.

Source: eMarketer

A Journey East

Embroidery expert and aficionado Deborah Jones journeyed to Turkey to learn about the traditional embroidery and needlecraft of nomadic people there.

By Deborah Jones

A world away from my studio outside Dallas, I began my education about the art of embroidery and needlecrafts of nomadic tribal people. Invited to accompany respected textile expert, author and curator Richard Isaacson on a two-week field trip of the textile world in Turkey, I couldn't pass up such an incredible opportunity.

Our first stop was inside the ancient walls of the old city section of Antalya on the Mediterranean coast. I quickly learned that the local textile dealers held Isaacson's knowledge in high regard, and we were always greeted warmly. In Turkey, Isaacson explains, the older carpets and other textiles are made using wool or silk-dyed with natural dyes, which are far softer in appearance and therefore more beautiful than the harsher effect created by synthetic dyes.

Jones had a chance to examine these antique suzanis, found in the shop of Hakan Tazecan in Antalya, Turkey



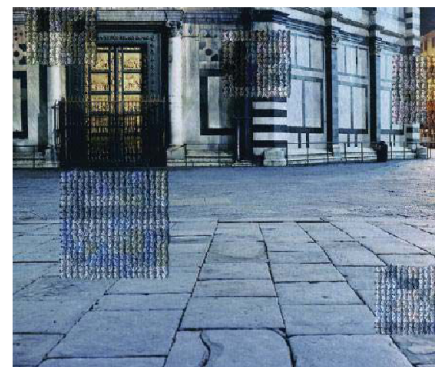
The dyes are mostly vegetable-based, and one particularly striking shade of red is made from an insect. These dyes hold their color incredibly well, even for 100 years or more.

The region in which we were traveling is well-known for its fine carpets, and I saw many exquisite, museum-quality specimens. I saw lots of kilims, which are essentially carpets without the pile. We saw antique urban embroidery, including outstanding embroidered cloths called suzanis and elaborately stitched men's robes called chapans. Tribal items included headwear, children's garments, animal coverings and practical items for use in the home. Many garments and almost every textile used in the home are highly decorated, and some of the stitches are so incredibly fine that it's hard to believe there could possibly be needles that small.

Today, some reputable dealers that value the heritage of the unique embroidery of the region produce replicas. These reproductions are very close in design to the authentic, but have slight differences, such as color variations. The purpose of the variations is to help assure that the reproductions won't be subjected to false aging.

Prices vary enormously, depending on quality and age. An ordinary suzani reproduction might sell between \$300 and \$1,200, while antique suzanis sell between \$3,000 and \$30,000. Handmade Armenian reproductions of European embroideries in Mehmet Çetinkaya's Istanbul gallery sell between \$2,500 and \$5,000. These exquisite embroideries take a skilled craftsman about a year to embroider by hand.

DEBORAH JONES has been involved with computerized embroidery for more than 30 years, and now shares her embroidery knowledge through www.myembroiderymentor.com, seminars, private consulting and magazine articles. Contact: djones@myembroiderymentor.com.



International Photographer Incorporates Threads Into Work

Diane Meyer, an artist and photographer based in New Jersey, creates a striking effect with cross-stitching in her photography: Mimicking the pixelation effect of digital tools used to obscure faces, she cross-stitched over her photos using thread colors that matched those of her photos. "Sections of the images have been obscured through a layer of embroidered pixels sewn directly into the photograph," Meyer writes on her website, www.dianemeyer.net. "The embroidery deteriorates sections of the original photograph, forming a new pixelated layer of the original scene." The photos Meyer uses in this embroidery art installation were taken in New Jersey, the western U.S. and Italy.

Scan this QR code to see more of Diane Meyer's art.



MARKETING MAVENS

The Right Targets



Weston Cotton

When other businesses were shrinking, Cotton King Inc. (*asi/169201*) was on the rise. The Pompano Beach, FL-based company, which provides decorated apparel and imprinted hard goods promotional products, has grown about 30% annually over the last couple of years. In

part, that rising revenue is the result of an intelligent, focused approach to marketing.

Co-Owner/President Weston Cotton says that effective marketing begins with knowing what markets to target. “We look at industries where there’s potential for good margins,” he says. “We key in on industries that have a need for what we provide.”

One of those markets is the high-end world of yachting. To capture clients in this exclusive industry, it’s essential to meet prospects and show them what you can do. To that end, the Cotton King team devotes itself to marketing its capabilities through a lot of in-person networking. For

example, company reps attend boating shows, such as the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show. Once there, they look to connect with people like the chief stewards of various yachts. The stewards are important points of contact, as they oversee a crew of five to 30 people for whom uniforms and other embellished garments need to be provided. When chatting with the stewards at shows, Cotton King reps are sure to give the potential buyers a packet – call it a media kit – that demonstrates the company’s expertise in providing top-notch decorated apparel and other products. “They like screen printing and embroidery,” says Cotton

of the yachting world buyers, noting that such in-person marketing has helped generate a steady flow of new clients.

When trying to expand its book of business in the corporate market, Cotton King often exploits the potential of referrals. “If you deliver a good product on time, people are more than willing to refer you,” Cotton says. With referrals, the marketing is essentially organic – a natural extension of the good work a shop has done that can be leveraged to develop new business. Cotton King has often gone from servicing a single department in a large corporation to many departments in the organization with referrals.

SALES STARS

Achieve Your Best Year Yet

Despite increased competitive pressures, Pittsburgh-based Kaules Screen Works had its most successful year to date in 2012. “Business doubled,” says Owner Garrett Kaule.

Yes, that’s due in part to the fact that the smaller shop delivers expertly embroidered and screen-printed apparel. But it’s also the result of an aggressive and adaptable sales effort by Kaule and his team. For instance, when a representative from a local landscaping company came in for shirts with one-color prints, Kaule didn’t let the opportunity pass. He delivered the shirts, but he also digitized the company’s logo and embroidered it on a beanie. Shown the logoed winter headwear, the buyer was impressed. He ended up ordering 24 beanies – and a dozen embroidered hats, too. “Nine times out of 10, when we take the initiative like that we get an additional sale,” Kaule says.

While some eschew cold-calling, Kaule embraces the challenge. Sometimes, Kaule seeks to get the ball rolling with prospects over the phone. Other times, he stops by the businesses of potential

clients to drop off pamphlets and his business card. If he’s lucky, he may meet the owner or decorated-apparel buyer, occasionally performing a quick quote on the spot. “It’s a way of introducing ourselves,” Kaule says. “Everyone needs hats, T-shirts and polos. We can deliver that for them, but they won’t know that unless they know about us.”

Kaules Screen Works has also managed to maintain clients even when those clients are undergoing budget-tightening. Each year, for example, Kaules had produced shirts and hats for an ultimate Frisbee league. But recently, the person who handled the buying departed. Around the same time, the league tightened its belt on spending and began shopping vendors. Committed to keeping the account, Kaule contacted the league, communicated the value his firm had provided and proposed finding a solution that would please the league. In the end, he managed to source less expensive shirts that still met the client’s needs. The league remained Kaule’s customer. “They’ve been ordering a ton from us,” he says.

LEARN IT LIVE!

Attend “Double Your Response Rate To E-Mail Campaigns” on Friday, March 22, 3:15 p.m. to 4:15 p.m., at **The ASI Show** Long Beach. In this tech-information session, you’ll learn how to design creative and effective e-mail campaigns that capture the attention of prospects and clients. Visit **ASIShow.com** to register.

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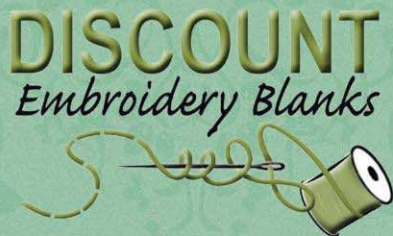


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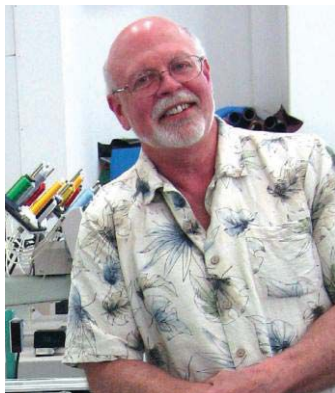
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SHOP MAKEOVER

Schedule For Success

“Key frustrations.” That’s the term Mike Little uses to describe the chronic hassles businesses encounter. And boy, scheduling and tracking jobs were definitely a key frustration for Little’s Team Mates Inc. (*asi/90674*) staff. A few years ago, the Eagan, MN-based contract decorator was organizing its schedule by posting jobs on a magnetic board. “It was an interesting system,” Little says, “but it was out of date.”



Mike Little

Knowing things needed to improve immediately, Team Mates got proactive. The shop scrapped the board and, with the help of Google Docs, revised its order processing, standardizing it using various spreadsheets and process forms. The system made scheduling and tracking worlds easier, which vastly improved organization and order flow through the shop. “About three months after we started using the new system, we stopped having emergencies,” Little says.

Not only did the now-orderly system increase productivity, it helped Team Mates be more precise with delivery and more responsive to customers. Since job expectations were clearer and there were no frantic emergencies to deal with, employees became happier and more efficient.

Buoyed by the benefits of a better-organized scheduling system, Little extended the enhanced orderliness to the shop’s division of labor. While the business had been loosely divided into two production departments, Little formalized the structure. It was established that one department focuses on repeat business – like orders from company stores. On the other hand, the custom department handles things like single pieces and work for various buyers that may not provide frequent ongoing business. The upshot of the improved scheduling and departmental structure? Happier clients, and a spike in sales. “We started gaining customers,” says Little, noting Team Mates’ apparel decorating sales have increased about 35% over three years.

That impressive revenue rise was also thanks in part to the strong relationship Little has cultivated with employees, which encourages them to “buy in” and give their best for the shop. “I approach management as a matter of personal involvement,” he says. “Each employee is important to me. We work with them, we include them in our decisions, and we’re constantly rewarded when we do so.”

IN THE CLOUD

SEO Superstar

As far as Kevin Kelly is concerned, a powerful Web presence is a critical factor to successfully marketing a decorating shop and ultimately driving an increase in business. “We like to think of the Internet as our sales force,” says Kelly, owner of Blue Heron Industries, a Little Falls, NJ-based apparel decorator. “You have to build a strong profile on the Web.” That robust presence, continues Kelly, is fueled by search engine optimization – the process of getting your site to rank high in organic search returns related to your business.

Blue Heron has been intensely focused on SEO from at least 2009. Since then, the shop’s Web traffic has skyrocketed 500%. Monthly increases continue to reach new heights. January traffic, for example, was up 40% over December – the biggest month-over-month rise Blue Heron has ever experienced. Of course, Kelly isn’t after Internet traffic for its own sake; he wants it to power greater sales. Fortunately, the improving traffic count has helped do just that, with the shop averaging about 30% annual growth over the last few years. “For us, the Web is everything,” Kelly says.

In part, Blue Heron has driven strong SEO by constantly updating content on its 16 websites. Literally every day, the shop adds a page composed of content related to market segments it keys in on, from private label T-shirts to direct-to-garment printing and cheap custom T-shirts. “We’re adding either static HTML pages that are permanent to the Web or indexable dynamic pages,” Kelly says. Creating pages with relevant content – “Relevance is essential!” professes Kelly – is something search engines like to see. It suggests the site is a reputable source that provides information/services that surfers on a particular topic desire. As a result, that leads to search engines elevating sites with frequently updated, quality content higher in organic returns.

Another way Blue Heron has bolstered SEO is by accruing more inbound links from sites with content that reinforces the products and services Kelly’s company provides. “You want relevant inbound links from non-spammy sites,” Kelly says. “If you’re in the T-shirt business, getting links from auto dealers isn’t going to help.” The larger your network of links, the more Google’s search algorithm believes your site is reliable.

“We like to think of the Internet as our sales force.”

Kevin Kelly,
Blue Heron Industries



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DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Five Steps

By Tonia Kimbrough and Bonnie Landsberger

Create A Detailed Embroidered Patch

Prepare to pitch embroidered patches to local and school sports team as we head into spring training season. Penn Emblem Co. (asi/77120) has perfected the patch process so that in five steps, you can go from design inspiration to a cheer-worthy result.

1

SUBMIT PREPARED

ARTWORK with fine details or lettering or a high-res photograph to Penn Emblem, whose staff will e-mail you back a rendering of the proposed patch within 48 hours. Once you approve the artwork, the vendor will digitize the file and create a stitch file. (For a small extra charge, you can request a stitch file that your particular embroidery machine can read for your future use.)

2

SELECT A FABRIC

and backing option. Penn Emblem will adhere the fabric to the backing under heat and pressure by using a fusing process.

3

GET READY FOR PRODUCTION.

Once your artwork has been digitized, Penn Emblem's appliques are made on a 30-station multi-head embroidery machine to transmit the design information to the equipment. Operators make necessary machine adjustments such as tensions, speed, etc., to achieve the highest quality patch.

4

FOR FINE DETAIL,

go with laser cut, also referred to as "hand cut," appliques like this PennBroidery "Bobcat" example. These can be cut to any shape, even a mascot - claws, tail, pointy ears and all.



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5

Heat seal or sew
on the patch
to your team's
uniforms.

Decorating & Fabric Trends



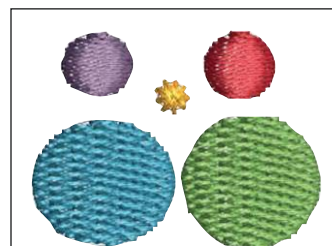
Bright, Blingy Designs

“When people see full-color photographic designs, they’re immediately intrigued,” says Shawn Lyons of Inglewood, CA-based The T-Shirt Makers. Using a Roland VersaStudio BN-20 20-inch digital printer/cutter with CMYK and metallic silver ink, Lyons created a series of limited-edition embellished hooded sweatshirts for his Inglewood storefront. This version pairs a vibrant photo of musician Princeton on a rich red shirt made of 80/20 poly/cotton with the added punch of rhinestones and studs for youthful swagger. “My customers love the way the colors shine on light or dark materials,” Lyons says. The trick to this image, according to Lyons, is multi-layering media and using high-quality equipment to ensure a crisp, consistent imprint.

Polkadot Perfection

Pat Williams, an award-winning digitizer and advisor to Madeira USA, offers three ways to easily add dots to your clients’ embroidered designs or logos:

1. **For small dots** (3mm or less in diameter) use the star tool in your digitizing software. Set the tool so it makes eight points, and you’ll get a perfect little circle.
2. **For circles that are 3mm to 7mm wide**, make your circles with satin stitches. If you make them more than 7mm wide, the widest stitches will likely droop and sag after the user wears and washes the garment.
3. **Digitize circles 8mm or larger** using tatami fill stitches.



Embroidery’s push and pull impacts how a circle will sew. Williams warns that once you sew out a perfect digitized circle, it’ll most likely look like an embroidered oval.

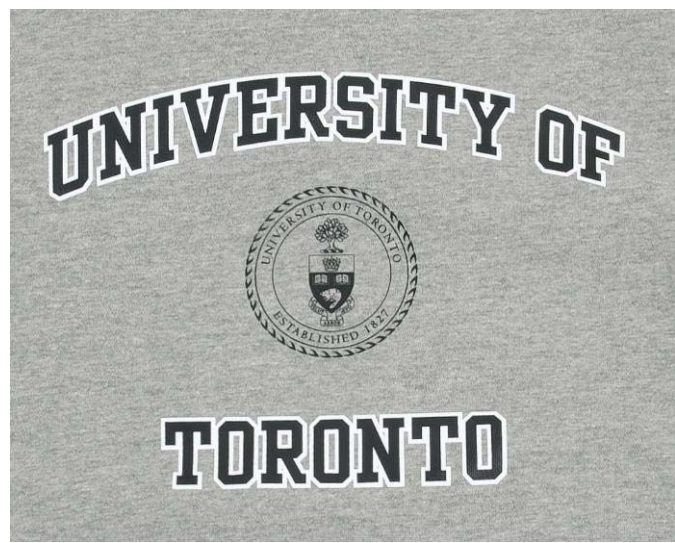
To correct the digitized circle so it sews out well, “Enter your software’s edit mode and pull down the top of the circle about 2%,” Williams says. “Then, pull out the sides of the circle about 1% and pull up the bottom of the circle 2%.”

Learn more from Williams’ *Digitizing Steps To Success* CDs available on Amazon.

TrueEdge Transfers

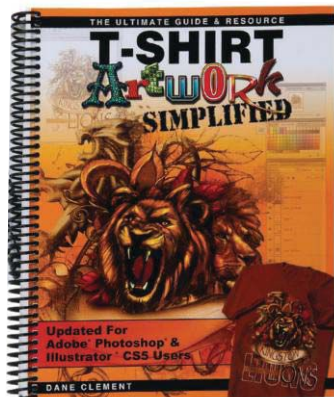
Check out the exceptional detail and free-standing text that Trimark Sportswear (*asi/92122*) achieves with its TrueEdge Transfers. This example presents the technique’s many advantages. The University of Toronto logo incorporates both small and large free-standing text with no borders around the precise lettering. The tree, crown and beaver portion of the logo are crisply executed with zero loss in resolution. Though the logo is large, it doesn’t have the look or feel of a sticker, an issue frequently associated with a traditional digital transfer. The logo is designed to remain stunning even after a user’s repetitive wash and wear.

“With the development of TrueEdge, decorators don’t have to alter their clients’ brand logo or identity with a border around it,” says Bill Horst, marketing manager at Trimark Sportswear. “TrueEdge Transfers allow for all the great aesthetic advantages of no contours on multicolor decoration with exceptional detail and text as low as 6 point type.” This process can be applied virtually anywhere on the garment.



DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Machine & Software Updates



GREAT DANE GRAPHICS; CIRCLE 162 ON FREE INFO CARD

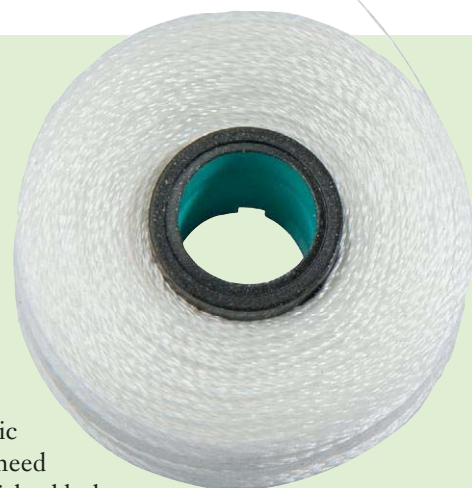
Step-by-Step Advice For Digital Art Prep

Graphic design just got easier. Two editions of the new how-to book *T-shirt Artwork Simplified* targets Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator (including version CS5) users as well as CorelDRAW and Photopaint (including version X5) users. Both versions contain more than 200 pages of comprehensive information, step-by-step illustrations and resources to help you or your design staff get started producing professional-quality artwork for decorated apparel.

You'll find information on vector and raster artwork on topics such as how to design an underbase, using gradients, using layer styles, adding type to a path and working with photo art. The book comes with a companion CD containing QuickTime movies to help further illustrate some of the lessons.

Trouble-Free Magnetic Bobbins

Improve your embroidery quality and increase your production by using new Magna-Glide magnetic bobbins (#P-15-IL) offered by American Embroidery Supply. The bobbin's magnetic core, combined with EB cross-link technology, optimizes thread delivery to create consistent tension from the beginning to end of each bobbin. It eliminates the need to re-set tensions as your bobbin thread runs out, and the magnetic core also prevents backlash or overspin, eliminating the need for anti-backlash springs. In fact, you should remove anti-backlash springs before you use Magna-Glide bobbins.



AMERICAN EMBROIDERY SUPPLY; CIRCLE 163 ON FREE INFO CARD

Brush N Bake Plus Hotfix Era Software

The new Brush N Bake from Colman and Co. offers embroiderers an easy way to start offering clients rhinestone designs – or add them to existing print or embroidered designs. The bundle comes with a 15" plotter/cutter, Sticky Flock rhinestone template material and enough Hotfix rhinestones and extra tools to get started. A real advantage of Brush n Bake, however, is the Hotfix Era software that comes with its purchase. Hotfix Era is part of Sierra's Design Era Suite, which means you can pull your embroidery designs in and add rhinestone embellishments in the same application.



COLMAN & CO.; CIRCLE 164 ON FREE INFO CARD

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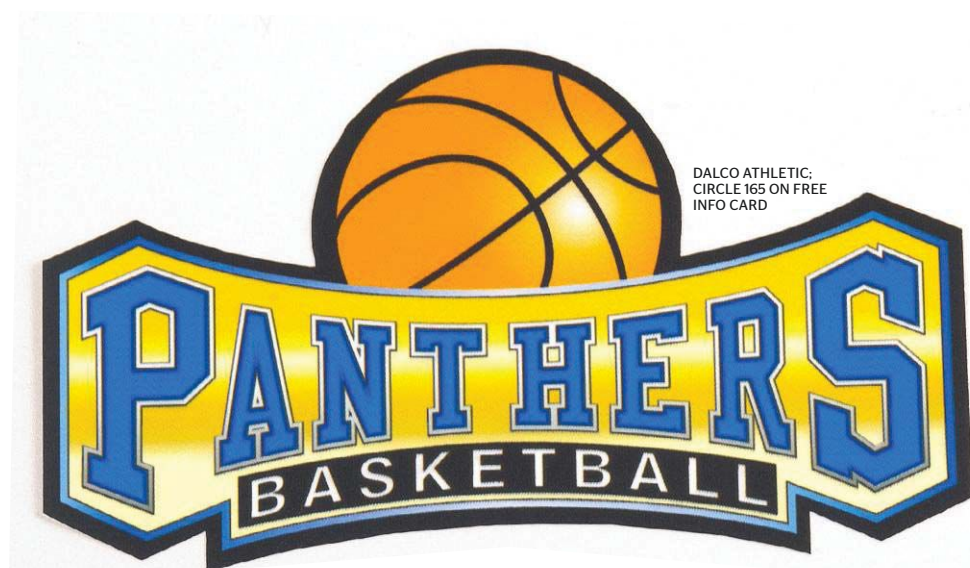
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DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Saving 9

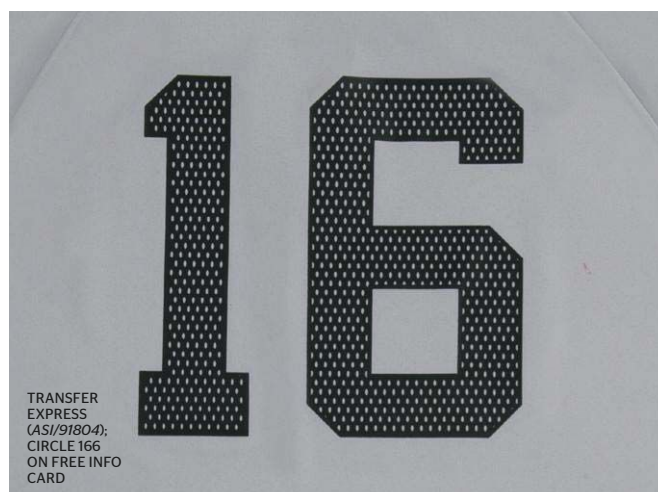


Whack 33% Off Full-Color ?

It's possible with Dalco Athletic's new Full-Color Dye Sublimation Twill Appliqués, which can cost as much as a third less than traditional twill. "A dealer can offer a three-color dye sublimation design at a price less than a two-color regular twill," says Mike Carter, spokesperson for Dalco Athletic. "This is because you have less sewing; less pressing or attaching of the design to the garment; and less weight as the dye sublimation is only one layer, regardless of the number of colors." The result is bold, bright color without the bulkiness of multiple layers and or a per-color cost.

✓ Product Pick

Today's trendy performance uniforms are lighter weight and breathable. They require an embellishment type that enhances rather than impedes these features. Transfer Express (*asi/91804*) provides a solution with its new Air Champ Mesh Number Transfers, which are more breathable than other styles because the holes aren't printed, allowing air to flow through making it more lightweight. Air Champ can be applied to cotton, polyester or cotton/polyester blends



in light or dark colors. It comes with a preprinted grid on the back that makes it easy to align. It takes only four

seconds to apply. It's offered in a wide variety of colors to coordinate with any team's home and away uniforms.

Quick Tips



COTSWOLD INDUSTRIES; CIRCLE 167 ON FREE INFO CARD

Cover up itchy, scratchy-feeling stitches with new Cloud Cover Stitch. Use the new Cloud Cover Stitch, a lightweight, fusible material, in conjunction with a stabilizer while embroidering delicate garments that must be soft to the touch, such as baby clothes. For more information, visit www.cotswoldindustries.com/tech-weave.



GRAPHIC SOLUTIONS GROUP; CIRCLE 168 ON FREE INFO CARD

Create the look of cracked paint or distressed appearance. Try Wilflex Epic Brittle offered by Graphic Solutions Group. The non-phthalate ink is designed to fracture and crack when you apply pressure to the ink's surface. It can also be distorted by bending or stretching the fabric. Learn more at www.gogsg.com.



IMPRINTABLES WAREHOUSE (*asi/58475*); CIRCLE 169 ON FREE INFO CARD

Don't stress about stretch. The new pressure-sensitive Spectra Flex film from Imprintables Warehouse (*asi/58475*) is

specifically designed with super-stretchability, making it ideal for swimsuits, leotards, performance wear or anything made of Lycra/Spandex. Visit www.imprintables.com for more information.

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DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Punching Sense

By Bonnie Landsberger

Puffed Up Appliqué

Adding design pizzazz with appliqué is a great way to keep your stitch count down – plus you can create a 3-D effect when you raise the appliqué with a batting insert. What happens if your decorator requests stitches on the appliqué fabric that would flatten the design? You'll need to create and digitize two designs: one to prepare the appliqué and the other to complete the job. Here's how to do it.

1

PREPARE THE ARTWORK

clean and exact for the fastest digitizing. In this case, remember that you can mirror objects on one side of the design to complete the opposite side. You'll plan the center for the appliqué so that the heart stands above the fabric and the swirl elements will also sew prior to tacking down the appliqué.

2

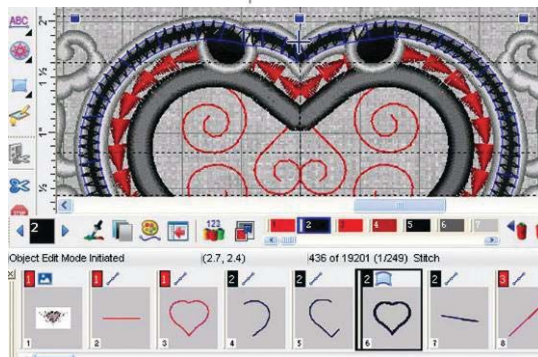
PUNCH APPLIQUÉ STITCHES.

The work begins with the elements decorating the appliqué. The decoration will be raised above the batting, so when you finish digitizing, you'll separate the work into two designs.

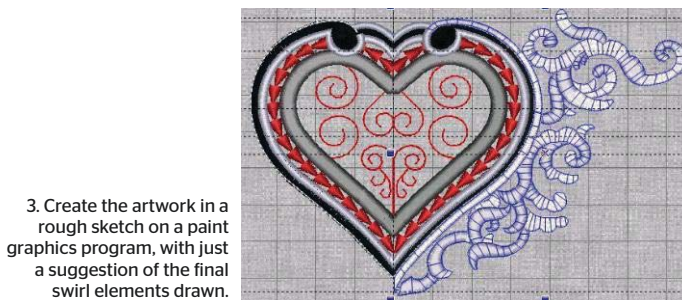
• **At the point where the design will be separated,** punch the placement line that outlines the area where you'll incorporate the appliqué. Then, punch a color stop to pause the machine so you can set down the appliqué fabric. Punch another slightly smaller run stitch just to the inside of the placement line to tack down your prepared appliqué piece.



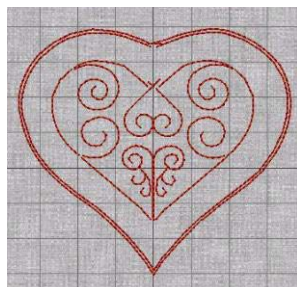
1. The first design decorates the appliqué piece and the second design completes the work.



2. This image shows the color sequence; color stops pause your machine when necessary. Note that the zigzag outline column that secures the fabric edge is selected.



3. Create the artwork in a rough sketch on a paint graphics program, with just a suggestion of the final swirl elements drawn.



4. The selected objects at the right are copied and ready to duplicate, and mirrored for the left side of the design.



3

SEPARATE YOUR DESIGN INTO

two designs. After dividing this particular project into two parts, you can create multiple appliqué pieces to efficiently prepare for a volume order. Retain the stitches that complete the first part of the design's outline in the second part for placement for the appliqué fabric. Depending on the element's shape, you may need to adjust the tack-down stitch line that begins the second part of the design to sew in a specific manner.

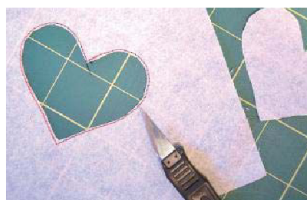
4

PUNCH OBJECTS OF THE

elements on one side. Maintain a logical path by using travel stitches to each repeatable object, and use run stitches to travel to the next side. When you arrive at a previously punched element, copy the object you need from the completed side. Then, move to the other side of the design, and mirror and set the element in place, checking each placement with your guidelines.

5

PUNCH THE TEMPLATE FILE. To avoid too much bulk under the outlying areas, trim the batting to rest just inside the center heart's boundaries, under the swirls. Then, cut the heart shape out of the center so you can trace it onto the batting. Then, cut the batting and place it so it covers the area to be puffed up.



5. Create a template file and sew it on cut-away stabilizer; then, cut it out to use as a guide for cutting the batting.



5. You're using thermal batting for this project with the shiny side up, so the soft side is against the appliqué fabric.

6

TEST-SEW THE DESIGN. Punch the first line of tack-down stitches to sew in a continuous line counter-clockwise. However, the tack-down stitches push the pre-trimmed fabric and the tip of the heart bottom doesn't line up properly. To fix these issues, you need to stop the machine, remove the stitches up to the place where the distortion began, and pin that side to hold the fabric in place.



6. Here's a fix in progress as you stop the machine to adjust the appliqué fabric.



When sewn on a fluffy fabric such as this polyester velvet throw, no batting is necessary.

Final

Here's the final design sewn on a velvet throw, with polymesh stabilizer and solvy topping; the design is 7.8" by 4.6" and 19,201 stitches.

TONIA KIMBROUGH is a contributing writer to Stitches. **BONNIE LANDSBERGER** is owner of Cannon Falls, MN-based Moonlight Design. Contact: moonltd@aol.com.

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Look Book

Runway: Paris Fashion Week

By Alissa Tallman

Expect to See Aquamarine in Fashion

Since Pantone has chosen Emerald Green as its 2013 Color of the Year, the glorious blue, green and cerulean hues have come out in force, especially the striking, water-inspired front-runner, aquamarine. From liquid-like material to sheer lace to leather to slivers of color blocking and fantastical embellishments, this flirty, but cool, hue is all over the runways in evening gowns to sportswear to outerwear for spring/summer 2013.

Here, take a look at some of the designers – Chanel, Araisara and Allude – who've added aquamarine to their collections, from intergalactic chic to color-blocking coolness. In the decorated-apparel industry, aquamarine is an excellent shirt color for men and women and also pops as a logo or design on a neutral garment.

Here are two other trends from Paris Fashion Week to watch:

● **Long shorts:** Look for fashion-forward shorts that hit mid-thigh or extend to knee-length, like those from DKNY and Alexander Wang. A departure from the super-short shorts of late, these shorts are tailored and more sophisticated – and more applicable for a variety of locations, occasions and environments.

● **Floral prints:** Both runway and retail apparel are ablaze with florals, from Dries van Noten to Naeem Khan, on everything from dresses, ties and hats to handbags and blazers. And, we're seeing lots of takes on floral print embellishments in the decorated-apparel industry.

Turn the page to learn more about these three trends and to see how they're playing out in the decorated-apparel marketplace. – *Nicole Rollender*

Araisara



PHOTO: VICTOR BOYKO

Paris Fashion Week unveiled a splendid array of apparel in aquamarine for spring/summer 2013, including this gauzy dress by Araisara. The black accents anchor the hue and make it stand out.

Monique Lhuillier



This silk chiffon one shoulder gown from Monique Lhuillier includes a single shaped shoulder detail. The gown's slit reveals lace-up shoes in a coordinated hue.

Elie Saab



PHOTO: PASCAL LE SEGRETAIN

The color coordinated ensemble from Elie Saab features open-toed pumps, pleated shirt, slacks and matching belt. A fun look for a casual night out.

Louis Vuitton



PHOTO: PASCAL LE SEGRETAIN

Floral prints were popular too as seen in this flirty, two-piece ensemble from Louis Vuitton.

Allude



PHOTO: KRISTY SPAROW

Silver shoes and black tie accents perfectly compliment this number from Allude allowing the color to pop. The mid-thigh shorts and flowing top is the ideal outfit for a day of shopping and sightseeing.

Look Book

Trends

COLOR

Aquamarine

Spotted in fabulous designs by Allude and Araisara during Paris Fashion Week 2013, aquamarine is enjoying a considerable following this season. A cross between mint and turquoise with a touch of pastel, this hue has a lively, refreshing vibe that can be successfully applied industry-wide.

Paul Kory, vice president of sales for Dyenomite

(*asi/51185*), says aquamarine is a versatile apparel color. “Aquamarine is an excellent color for women’s apparel because it’s light and airy,” he says. “It’s also being worn by men via polo and classic button-down shirts, T-shirts and jackets.” Kory points out the hue’s youth-market appeal as well.

Mary Ellen Nichols, director of marketing communica-

tions for Bodek and Rhodes (*asi/40788*), illustrates aquamarine’s complex persona: “It’s a color that symbolizes energy and healing but also nurtures play, which is why it attracts the child in all of us.” She recommends it as an ideal hue for promotional campaigns that specifically focus on relieving the customer of all duty. “It’s the perfect color for campaigns that say, ‘Relax and let

us do the worrying for you.’”

Finally, Kory makes note of aquamarine’s wide possibilities in terms of embellishments. “It can be screen printed and embroidered in almost any color, and the imprint will really pop,” he says. “Your imprint will look great whether it’s a left-chest embroidery design or full-front screen-printed or sublimated design.”



Appearing on the runway in Paris, aquamarine has appeal not only in haute couture fashion but in industry apparel as well.

PHOTO: VICTOR BOYKO



You can find this full-zip burnout hoodie (W1280) at MV Sport/Weatherproof (*asi/68318*; circle 153 on Free Info Card).



Antigua Group Inc. (*asi/36320*; circle 152 on Free Info Card) carries this cotton-jersey polo shirt (100279).

APPAREL

Long Shorts

Shorts that hit mid-thigh or extend to knee-length were showcased in 2013 Fashion Week designs by the likes of DKNY, Rag & Bone and Alexander Wang. A departure from the “short-shorts” trend we’ve seen over the past few seasons, shorts of a longer length – whether tailored, Bermuda style or military – provide a more sophisticated look while maintaining the casual comfort of regular shorts.

“The long shorts trend was originally an urban one but is now popular with young men and teens of all demographics,” says John Ottaviano, director of sales and marketing for Rothco (*asi/83708*). He points out that this shorts style is effective when implemented into uniforms. “This is a great uniform short for restaurants, theme parks, athletic teams or any organization made up of teens or young adults. The shorts present a strong, clean look while providing a high level of comfort and utility for any body type.”

Long shorts are also a favorite of women because of the endless assortment of shoe styles that can be worn with them. Pumps, boots or even canvas sneakers make for an excellent match.



Brandwear's (*asi/41545*; circle 154 on Free Info Card) take on this trend is dubbed “Peggy Long Short” (391) - knee-length shorts made of a bamboo/cotton/spandex mix.



Allude was another designer at Paris Fashion Week that set the spring/summer fashion trends with its shorts collection, which represented a variety of hues, from neutrals to cool tropical colors. The pastel blue and green shorts featured a print reminiscent of funky tie-dye styles and were paired with colorful pumps or metallic silver sandals.

PHOTO: KRISTY SPAROW

EMBELLISHMENT

Floral Prints

High-fashion and ready-to-wear apparel is awash in fabulous floral prints this spring. From Dries van Noten's and Paul & Joe's eclectic designs to the more subtle prints from Naeem Khan, florals are everywhere, adorning everything from dresses, ties and hats to handbags and blazers. Such designs encourage an optimistic outlook and bolster our confidence, not to mention lending apparel a healthy dose of feminine zest and appeal.

Peter Schlieckmann, product manager for Assertive Creativity LLC (*asi/37166*), commends this trend. “Apparel sporting floral print has been a consistent top seller,” he says. “Many of our floral prints are combined with solid colors and gradient effects to achieve a bold appearance as well as emphasize the floral design.”

Apparel and products with floral-print designs are ideal for spring-themed events of all sorts, regardless of the occasion. This trend also lends itself wonderfully to embroidered embellishments, which can be added to blank items.



PHOTO: PASCALLE SEGRETAIN



Assertive Creativity LLC (*asi/37166*; circle 155 on Free Info Card) distributes numerous floral-print acrylic scarves like this one (SU-ASFJ8-4) in an impressive range of colors and designs.

Haute couture is playing with floral prints. This skirt and sleeveless top from Louis Vuitton combines a fun and funky floral design with aquamarine.

Look Book

Showcase

The latest headwear designs feature a wide range of eye-catching styles. From fedoras and floral fascinators to berets and even bowlers, today's hottest fashion designers have capitalized on the increasing popularity of headwear and thrown numerous inventive styles into the mix.

David Goldman, president of Philadelphia Rapid Transit (*asi/77945*), says current wholesale hat trends straddle both fashion and functionality. "There's a higher perceived value associated with headwear today," he says. "How a hat performs and how it looks are equally proportionate for the end-user." Sun protection and moisture-wicking ability are two essentials that both clients and end-users insist upon. A regular cotton baseball cap, for example, is "old school," Goldman says. "Cotton alone isn't ideal for hot environments, and most baseball caps only shade the forehead." As a result, Goldman says, customers are investing in hats with wider brims and more complex fabrics. "People want to stay cool and comfortable, and fabrics like solid-weave straw, cotton and microfiber provide them with that comfort."

It's also important to end-users that their headwear be fashion-forward: and pins, buttons, patches and tone-on-tone embroidery are popular.

Stitches.com
See more headwear selections in a slideshow.



This cozy slouch beanie (DT618) from SanMar (*asi/84863*; circle 156 on Free Info Card) is crafted with an acrylic/polyester mix and comes in charcoal heather, dark fuchsia heather, forest green heather and light gray heather.



This fitted, garment-washed military cap from Spectrum Ideas (*asi/88638*; circle 158 on Free Info Card) is made of 100% cotton twill and features twill appliqué letters.



Otto Cap (*asi/75350*; circle 157 on Free Info Card) offers this melton wool blend ivy cap (504-117) that includes a screen-printed design on the front panels with a felt embroidered emblem, and fleece lining. The enclosed back includes a screen-printed felt appliqué.



Otto International (*asi/75350*; circle 157 on Free Info Card) offers this melton wool blend ivy cap (504-117) that includes a screen-printed design on the front panels with a felt embroidered emblem, and fleece lining. The enclosed back includes a screen-printed felt appliqué.



Philadelphia Rapid Transit (*asi/77945*; circle 176 on Free Info Card) carries this helmet-style jacquard cap (6772) that's fleece-lined and features a chin cord and knit-in custom design.



Otto International (*asi/75350*; circle 157 on Free Info Card) offers this melton wool blend front ivy cap (504-107) that features brass grommets, variegated tweed back and fleece lining. The enclosed back includes a screen printed felt appliqué.



This mesh back cap (502-106) from Otto International (*asi/75350*; circle 157 on Free Info Card) features a tattoo-inspired decoration that includes an embroidered Luck design, leather cross appliqué, tone-on-tone screen printing and embossed metal button. Choose from black, gray or pink.



This custom hat/scarf/mittens from Bishop the Garment Co. (*asi/40585*; circle 171 on Free Info Card) is made of 100% wool and includes attention-grabbing deer horns to match the Belvedere Vodka brand.

Cheerleading

Although traditionally viewed as a sideline event to athletic games, cheerleading has emerged as a sport in its own right. In some aspects, the physical competitiveness of a cheer squad even rivals that of the basketball, football and soccer teams it supports. Cheer teams strive to promote themselves as determinedly as the sports teams they represent; hence, cheer apparel plays a major role in “branding” a team as a unit and representing its personal style and exceptional athleticism.

Andrew Sequeira, co-owner of Sparkle Plenty Designs Inc. (*asi/88442*), says “bling” is a highly popular aspect of today’s cheer uniforms, which can consist of a variety of different pieces, including warm-up suits and sports bras. “Bling is especially eye-catching in a performance routine when it’s part of cheerleading apparel,” he says. “We’ve fulfilled requests for a few squads in lining the outside of the pant leg with rhinestones, and we’ve added stones to sports bras as well.” The newest trend features crystal body tattoos, which Sequeira’s company provides numerous designs of. “Crystal body tattoos are nice because they’re different, plus they’re cost effective,” he says. “They’re a unique way to convey team spirit.” Body crystals are often applied to the face and hands, but they can also adorn the neck, midriff, and arms.



Decorator: Howard Potter, CEO of A&P Master Images, Yorkville, NY; hpotter@masteryourimage.com

This cheer-inspired screen-printed top and skirt were designed for CNY Roasters, an annual comedy roast that benefits the Utica, NY-based Kelberman Center, a not-for-profit organization that provides support for autism patients and their families.



Decorators: Andrew Sequeira and Lee Romano Sequeira, co-owners of Sparkle Plenty Designs (*asi/88442*) in Philadelphia; info@sparkle-plenty.com

The Wincheer Legacy design is done in clear and light siam rhinestones on a women’s long-sleeve crewneck. It was decorated several years ago for cheer team mothers who requested them. The Bay City Storm top is decorated with clear and aqua rhinestones, designed for the cheerleaders and their mothers on the Bay City Storm cheer team. Standard production time is two weeks. Sparkle Plenty Designs uses only premium quality rhinestones, and, as an extra quality control step, manually reviews and adjusts each design.

Decorator: Carolyn Cagle, owner of Strikke Knits, LLC, Stacy, MN; strikkeknits@gmail.com

These custom brushed fleece mittens were made for cheer teams and their fans during the cold Minnesota months. Each features customization on the glove and the wrist band, and is available in team colors. Made with a double lining and no exposed strings.



Decorator: Pam Augspurger, owner of Dream Maker Embroidery & Sewing, Piedmont, SC; pam@dreammakerembroidery.com

This team shirt from Augusta Sportswear (*asi/37467*) was decorated for the dance spirit squad at Wren High School in Anderson County, SC. It features the team name in sequin embroidery on the front.



Decorator: Joe Carillo, graphic designer/owner of JNL Creations (*asi/232677*), Covina, CA; joemc@jnlcreations.com

This jacket was produced using heat-transfer material from Stahls’ instead of tackle twill. It was made for West Covina Pop Warner cheerleading competitions. The client orders 36 to 72 each season with various designs each year.

Look Book

Inspiration

Sophia Narrett's website, which presents several pieces of her artwork, is www.sophianarrett.com.



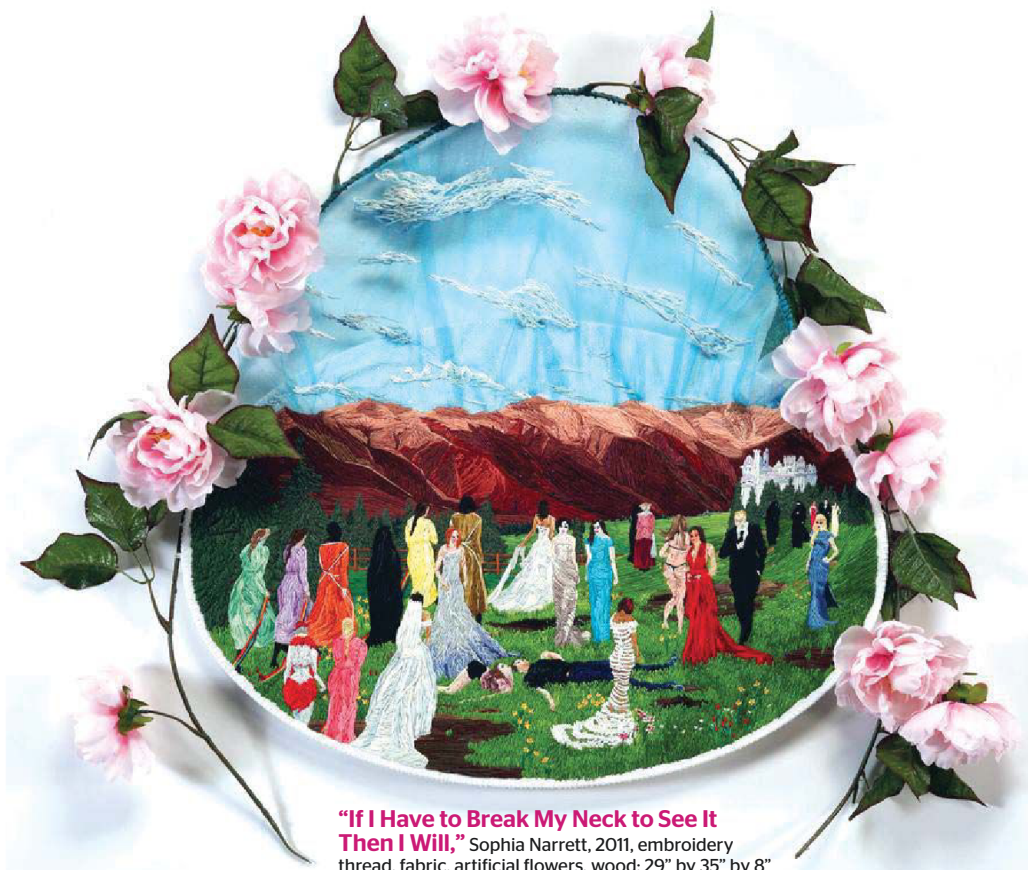
Sophia Narrett's initial encounter with embroidery thread was serendipitous. She'd merely intended to integrate the thread into a sculpture project she'd been working on, but to her surprise the new material beckoned her to experiment with it in her paintings. She was delighted by the effects. "I fell in love with the texture and colors of the thread itself," she says. "It seemed natural to try making an image with it, and I began to consider the embroidery process as a way of drawing."

When creating a new piece, Narrett works on a few hoops with cross-stitch fabrics, sewing different sections of the main image she's creating. Then she cuts them out and pieces them together. "After developing each part to a certain extent, I remove the pieces from their hoops and attach them together so I can finish working the image as a whole," she says.

Narrett is primarily inspired by scenes of "climactic emotion" from various narrative works, including movies, music videos and literature. For the artist, "someone pouring their heart out, crying, and leaving it all on the court" signifies a universal yet extraordinary experience that reveals profound truths about the human condition.



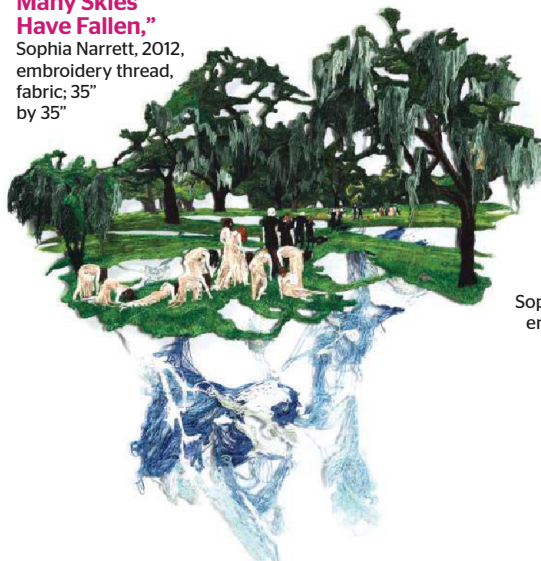
Narrett is pursuing an MFA at the Rhode Island School of Design. Her work was featured in several exhibitions on the East Coast, and she completed two artist residencies.



"If I Have to Break My Neck to See It Then I Will," Sophia Narrett, 2011, embroidery thread, fabric, artificial flowers, wood; 29" by 35" by 8"

"No Matter How Many Skies Have Fallen,"

Sophia Narrett, 2012, embroidery thread, fabric; 35" by 35"



"To Be Given Something,"

Sophia Narrett, 2012, embroidery thread, fabric; 13" by 17"



ALISSA TALLMAN is a contributing writer to *Stitches*.



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Number One In Apparel Decorating Equipment

PROFITABLE appliqué

With new and affordable laser technology, it's easier than ever to make a neat profit with unique and fashion-forward appliqué. Plus, see the most popular appliqué styles out there today.

By Christopher Ruvo

The complicated and trendy appliqué work produced by retail brands like Abercrombie & Fitch and Hollister – from reverse to distressed designs – has become an increasingly popular staple of decorating shops that want to offer unique designs or to easily decrease stitch count in larger embroidery designs. “Appliqué is another way to expand what you offer customers, which can make you a more valuable resource and increase your business,” says Joyce Jagger, an industry consultant and owner of The Embroidery Coach.

Case in point: A Pittsburgh-based school was hesitant to purchase sweatshirts with a unique distressed appliqué design from its decorator; they weren't sure if the retail-looking designs

would sell. Cautiously, the educators opted to buy a dozen from decorated-apparel provider, Pittsburgh-based ArtRageous Embroidery & Screen Printing. If those sweatshirts sold, the buyers reasoned, they'd buy more. And the sweatshirts did sell. In fact, students virtually cleared the school store of them overnight. Impressed, the school ordered 100 more. When those sold in a flash, they ordered another 200. The sales were impressive, and definitely representative of what decorators across the U.S. are experiencing with appliqué sales. “We're seeing this over and over again with schools,” according to ArtRageous' management. “Once they see the distressed appliqué and somebody gets it, then everybody else wants it too.”

ArtRageous' anecdote exemplifies the sales potential that lies in appliqué, be it distressed, reverse or a “standard” clean-cut design (see “Terms to Know” box). Given those lucrative possibilities, it makes sense for decorators to get up and running with appliqué. Read on for markets that are buying appliqué, strategies for marketing the embellishment, smart technique tips and reader-submitted appliqué designs that just may spark your next big idea.

Schools are among the many markets into which embroiderers are selling appliqué. While athletic teams that use appliqué for uniform letters and names represent another major market, the sales potential in appliqué extends to a

“You can't cut your throat. If you compete on price alone, it's a race to the bottom and nobody wins.”

Rob Dubow,
Dubow Textile (asi/700107)

TERMS TO KNOW



Appliqué: Decoration or trim cut from one piece of fabric and stitched to another to add dimension and texture (originally from the French word *appliquer*, which means to apply). The technique is hundreds of years old, originating when people patched torn clothes with other fabrics. Also known as patchwork, appliqué has been used to create bright, unique designs on quilts. Today, appliqué is used widely in retail, college, sports and other youth apparel, and as a way to create interest in a design while decreasing stitches.



Distressed Appliqué: An appliqué design in which the edges are frayed intentionally, providing a look that's trendily vintage, worn and faded.



Reverse Appliqué: A process in which the fabric is placed on the underside of the garment, and the garment is cut along the tack-down stitch so that the material shows through.

diverse range of clientele, from fraternities and various corporations, to nonprofits, health-care institutions, event organizers and a whole gamut of small businesses.

"There's a wide array of end-users interested in appliqué," says Rob Dubow, owner of Saint Cloud, MN-based Dubow Textile (*asi/700107*). Dubow would know. With about 8% of his large contract decorating shop's business coming from appliqué sales, Dubow has produced appliqué on garments for advertising specialty distributors who sell to end-users in vastly different markets. For example, Dubow created 700 hooded sweatshirts for a Star Wars convention. The hoodies featured an appliqué design of Darth Vader's helmet. "We had to balance the appliqué in the design with what we did in thread to make sure we got it just right," says Rose Wegscheid, Dubow's appliqué artist.

For another job, Dubow created a multimedia design that incorporated screen printing and distressed appliqué. The decorated sweatshirts were sold at a youth hockey tournament. Dubow also has a bar/restaurant in Minneapolis for which he has embellished appliqué designs on more than 6,000 pieces over the course of three years. "They give the garments to staff and sell them to customers," Dubow says.

So why does appliqué have such widespread appeal? For one thing, it provides a retail look, enabling decorators to offer on-trend designs with a high perceived value that mimic the embellishments seen on hot apparel at the mall. "Appliqué offers a current and fashionable look that spans all age groups," says Andrea Pietrowsky, marketing specialist for Stahls' ID Direct (*asi/88984*).

For embroiderers, the advantage of appliqué is that it empowers you to create many different effects and textures. You can also cover broader areas with fewer stitches, which can make for cleaner finished designs. "If you're good with your appliqué process, it can take less time and be easier than traditional embroidery," says Erich Campbell, digitizer at apparel decorator Albuquerque, NM-based Black Duck Inc.

TECHNIQUE TIPS

Depending on the equipment available in your shop, design type and other factors, the methods for creating appliqué vary. For an illustrative example, here's a step-by-step instruction of how one accomplished embroiderer created a particular appliqué design. Here, Joyce Jagger, an industry consultant and owner of The Embroidery Coach, breaks down how she made the appliqué on this denim jacket without using automatic appliqué-creating software.

1 Create your finished embroidery design first. Then, add a run stitch for your appliqué placement line on the garment followed by a tack-down run stitch line. The placement stitch line is also the line for your pattern. Note: You have the outside edge of your satin stitch, then about one-third to the inside of your appliqué is your placement line, then about one-

third of the way out to the finished inside edge is your tack-down line, and then the final one-third is the inside edge of your satin stitch.

2 Copy the placement stitch onto another work-sheet in your software and reverse it to create the actual pattern that you use to cut out the appliqué. Print this pattern out and press it onto the back of the fabric. Then, cut out along the outside

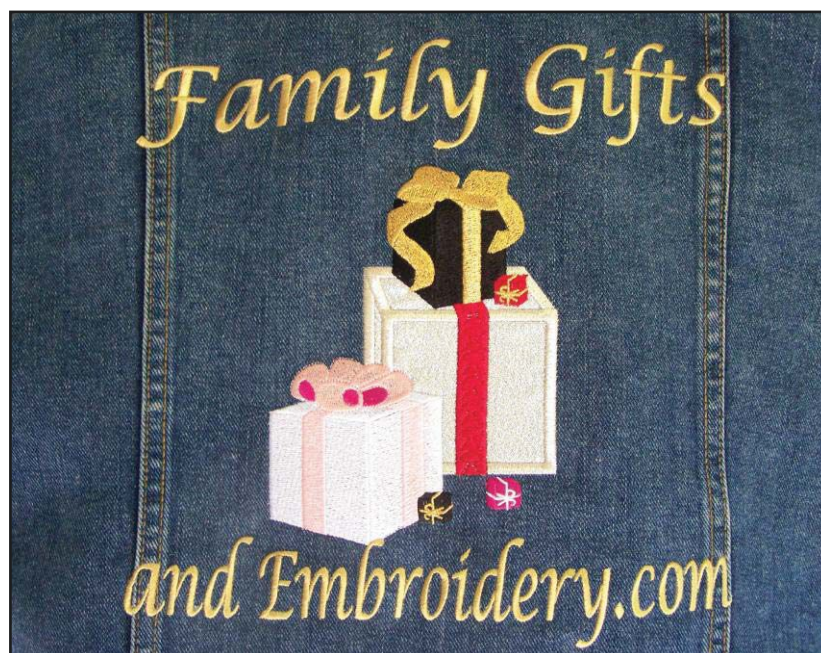
line of the printout and spray it lightly with embroidery spray glue and set it aside. If you're sending the appliqué pattern to a cutter, then you'll create an appliqué cut pattern with the extension that will go to your cutter.

3 Hoop your garment and start your design. If your appliqué is your first item, and it's in this design, the run stitch for your placement line will run and then you stop the

machine. You can manually stop your machine or digitize a stop in the software.

4 Run the tack-down stitch to firmly hold your appliqué piece in place and finish your total embroidery design.

5 After all of the embroidery has sewed, press your appliqué piece down firmly with a heat-press machine or a hot iron. This will give it a finished look and prolong the appliqué's life.



APPLIQUÉ OPTIONS

So you want to provide clients with appliqué? Here are a few options:

1 Source pre-cut letters and graphics from companies like Stahls' ID Direct (*asi/88984*) and Dalco Athletic, and then embroider them on garments and soft goods in-house.

● **Positives:** You avoid the upfront expense of buying equipment to create appliqué in your shop. You free up time you would have spent cutting letters and graphics, so you can focus on other business matters.

● **To Consider:** You're using stock designs, unless you commission your vendor to create custom appliqué designs for your clients. And, if you're doing greater volumes of appliqué, the expense of continually buying pre-cut graphics and letters over time

could outweigh the cost of investing in equipment to cut the appliqué yourself.

2 Invest in a cutting system like the Ioline 300 from Ioline Corp., which enables you to create and cut custom appliqué designs in-house.

● **Positives:** You'll have total in-shop control over your designs. You'll also have the potential to increase appliqué output, while decreasing lead and production times. A cutting system allows you to expertly cut vinyl, which has high markup value.

● **To Consider:** An Ioline 300 runs in the neighborhood of \$8,000. Ask: Are you – or will you be – doing enough appliqué to justify the expense? And, do you want to take on

the responsibility of cutting in-house?

3 Invest in a laser bridge or single-head machine laser attachment, such as those produced by Proel and Seit.

● **Positives:** Such systems rapidly increase appliqué production times over other methods. They also enable decorators to produce high-margin, retail-flavored, multi-layered, reverse and distressed appliqué with minimal steps.

● **To Consider:** Price tags: Large laser-bridge systems' cost and size mean they're only usually options for the biggest shops. Even a Seit single-head laser runs upward of \$25,000. Decorators must crunch the numbers and

determine if their anticipated appliqué output will justify the costs.

4 "Traditional" method – basically hand-cutting letters and graphics.

● **Positives:** You don't need any special equipment. You can create patterns and sewing files in your own embroidery design software, and you can cut the design with sharp scissors. This is a low-cost way to do small quantities or proof samples.

● **To Consider:** This "primitive" method is totally inefficient for large quantities – there's too much labor involved with cutting the graphics by hand.

INSPIRED APPLIQUÉ

Looking for appliqué inspiration? Check out these designs from top decorators.

1 Appliqué For The Auto World Jacksonville, FL-based Eye Kandy Designs created this appliqué design for Down To Earth, a car club. Stitched onto a Dickies Eisenhower jacket, the appliqué material is black sparkle vinyl. Eye Candy Owner R.J. Silva's method for creating the design included cutting out the sparkle vinyl with an X-acto knife by hand while his embroidery machine performed the fill stitch in pink and blue satin outline stitch. Once all the flat stitching was done, Silva ran another outline stitch and placed the vinyl material on top of that. "Very carefully I held the material in place while the machine did small

periodic tack-down stitches in corners and along edges," he says. "Then I ran a tackle stitch along the whole outside of the appliqué." He concluded with the final pink satin outline stitch along the sparkle vinyl. "I think the design and the vinyl have a lot of appeal for the cheer market too," Silva says.

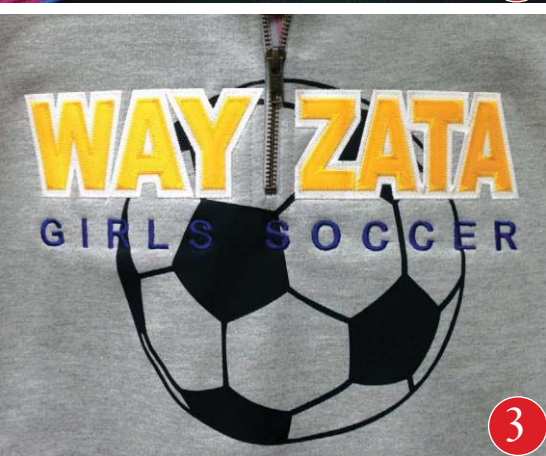
2 Jacketback Appliqué

A couple of years ago, Rosemary Schafer invested in an Ioline 300 system to create appliqué. "It opened up a whole new market," says the owner of Northfield, NJ-based By the Sea Embroidery. "We can make custom, specialized shapes and designs for our

Visit [Stitchwork blog on Stitches.com](http://Stitchwork.blog.onStitches.com) for more on appliqué.

appliqué, and give our customers exactly what they want."

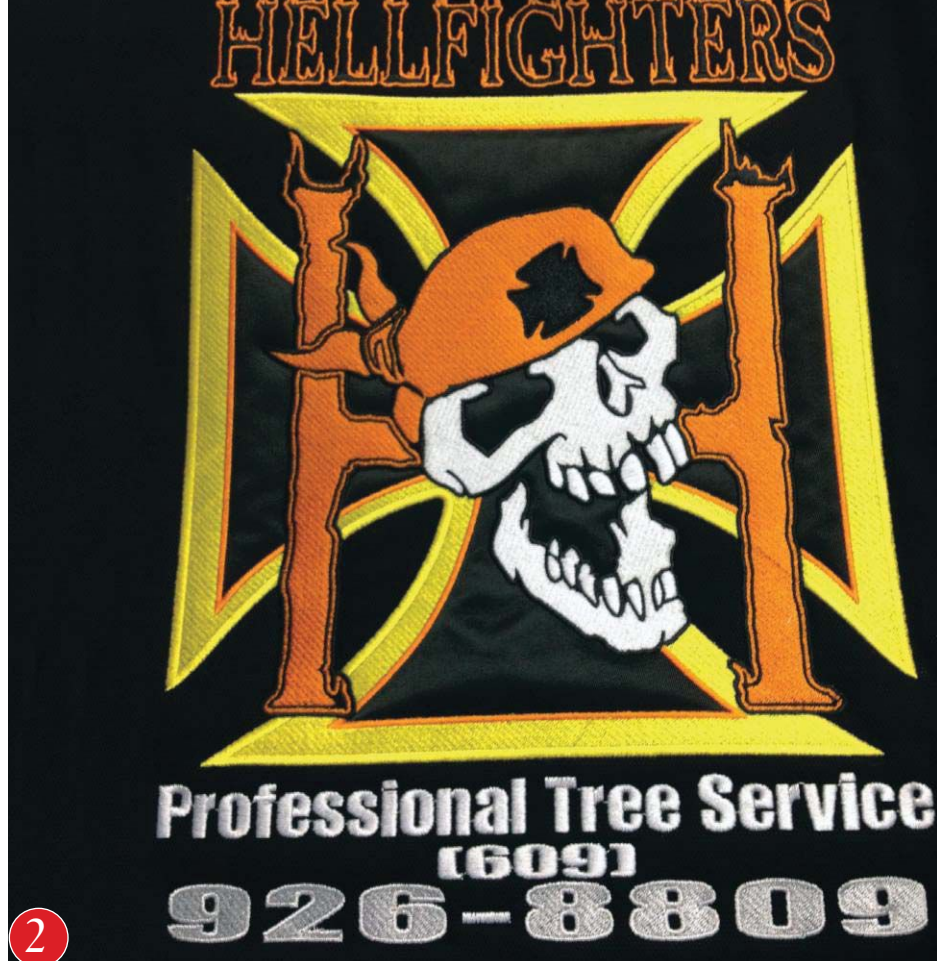
By offering custom appliqué, Schafer expanded her business with Hellfighters, a tree service company. Previously, the company had only done left-chest logos. But then the owner wanted something sharp for the back of thick workwear jackets worn in the winter. Schafer came up with the cool combination appliqué-and-embroidery design you see here. The appliqué portion of the design is the black cross, with the twill material also showing through the skull's eyes and bandanna. "It gives the design dimension," says Schafer. "It makes the design pop."



3 Multimedia Appliqué
When the mother and her soccer-playing daughter came to VSA Custom Apparel (*asi/700739*), they knew they wanted off-field casual apparel with a unique design for the girl's youth soccer team. But just what that design would look like, they had little idea.

Enter Kristin Williams. The president of VSA consulted with the clients, ascertaining their tastes and making design suggestions. In the end, Williams developed this multimedia piece that blends appliqué, embroidery and screen printing on a feminine-cut quarter-zip. Indeed, developing outside-the-box apparel decoration that combines appliqué and other mediums is one of the ways VSA distinguishes itself from the competition. Says Williams: "We also use sublimation with our appliqué as well as mixed-media designs using twill, felt, embroidery, chenille and screen printing."

4 Distressed Is Best
Embroiderers eager to cater to clients' taste for cool, fashion-forward designs have increasingly been adding distressed appliqué to their decorating repertoire. ArtRageous Embroidery & Screen Printing, for example, created this "Invisible Thread" distressed piece for a company in none other than the magic



industry. At the request of the client, the thread, fabric and appliqué are essentially monochromatic, something the client wanted to make the embellishment appear "invisible" – a clever marketing move that speaks to the company's magic business.

Meanwhile, Yorkville, NY-based A&P Master Images created the other design (Results Matter Fitness) for free for a client that runs a fitness center after she won

a contest the shop had run. Fortunately, staff and patrons of Results Matter Fitness loved the appliquéd hoodie so much that the client decided to place an initial order for another dozen. More orders were expected. "Doing the one-off for free more than paid for itself," says A&P Owner Howard Potter.

CHRISTOPHER RUVO is a staff writer for *Stitches*; he can be reached at cruvo@asicentral.com.



SOLVE CUSTOMER CONUNDRUMS

Learn how the experts deal with decorated-apparel clients who want the lowest price, constantly come in with rush orders or change their minds after the proofing process.

By Andraya Vantrease

Interacting with customers the right way is half, or three-quarters, of the battle for most businesses. It's no different for apparel decorators, who have clients of all sizes, from corporate accounts to sports teams to individuals.

To succeed, business owners should put themselves in their customers' shoes, and consider what it's like to be on the other side of the fence, according to Martha Rogers, Ph.D., founding partner of Peppers & Rogers Group and co-author of nine books on customer service including *Extreme Trust: Honesty as a Competitive Advantage* and *Rules to Break & Laws to Follow*.

"Here are three questions owners should always be asking themselves: What's it like to be our customer? What should it be like to be our customer? What can we do today to close that gap?" Rogers says. "Instead of simply thinking about selling something, decorators need to think about how they can help their customers be successful."

Whether you're a brick-and-mortar shop or a Web-based business, you need to make it as easy as possible for your customer. "Create simple paper and online forms, be available for questions and show clients samples – eliminate as many roadblocks as you can so your customer has an enjoyable experience and wants to brag about it," Roger says.

At the end of the day, it's up to you and your staff to educate your customers – and to listen to what they're telling you. When a client is upset, it's because they feel there's been a breach of trust. "Think about the situation from the client's perspective, accept the mistake and fix it," Rogers says. "Almost every time, the client has a point. Maybe not the one you want to hear, or even the right one in your mind, but it's a point."

On the other hand, use your judgment about who's honest and who's trying to squeeze a deal out of you every chance they get. "Some customers are just making trouble, and in that case, it's OK to not do business with everyone," she says.

Here, experts offer their advice on how to solve – and prevent – the six most common customer conundrums in the decorated-apparel industry.

1 Million-dollar taste on a dollar-store budget.

Here's the situation: After describing to you a detailed decoration type on a higher-end garment in a quote request, your customer balks at the fair price you provide, and won't budge on features. What now?

First, take a look at what might be happening. While most customers are familiar with embroidery and screen printing, when it comes to specialty decorating such as direct-to-garment printing or rhinestone applications, they're often in the dark. So, if your customer continues to order the same screen-printed garment with the same complex or expensive art, it's not that they're out to be difficult. Actually, nine times out of ten, it's because they don't know what their other options are. "Just because

“You can’t cut your throat. If you compete on price alone, it’s a race to the bottom and nobody wins.”

Erich Campbell, *Black Duck Inc.*

we’re thinking about direct-to-garment printing, rhinestones or heat transfers doesn’t mean customers are,” says Don Copeland, digital products manager at ColDesi. “Show them the nontraditional techniques if you want them to buy.”

Erich Campbell, digitizer and e-commerce manager at Black Duck Inc. in Albuquerque, NM, suggests giving the customer pricing for what he originally requested and also budget- and production-friendly options. “I say, ‘Here’s the price for what you wanted. It’s not very cost-effective, but this is it,’ ” Campbell says. “Then, I give them additional options that will decrease the price per garment, but still keep the general look they want.”

For example, if a customer asks for 24 pieces to be screen printed with three colors on the front, three colors on the back and one-color designs on each sleeve, she’s looking at more than \$200 in screen charges alone. Decorators can consider reducing the number of colors to create a two-color design, using the shirt color and perhaps eliminating one location. “Their faces go from appalled at the first price, bummed because they think they can’t afford what they want, and then, typically, accepting and satisfied with an alternative,” Campbell says. “Decorators must explain why the idea was so expensive to execute and help customers understand what they have to charge for.”

You can also show your customers cheaper alternatives. Here’s a good example: Send rhinestone transfers to customers with instructions on how to apply. “I had a customer one time who did wholesale work for apparel decorators in his area,” Copeland says. “One year, he made a Christmas tree design with rhinestones, and when he delivered his orders, he’d hand the transfer out and show his cus-

tomers how easy it is to use. It resulted in many rhinestone orders.”

2 Comparing apples to oranges.

When it comes to strategy, some customers play one decorator against another to get better pricing; however, they aren’t always aware that they’re comparing different garments and imprinting methods, setup and artwork services and overall quality. Brick-and-mortar shops are constantly competing with Internet companies that waive setup fees, don’t charge shipping and shrink margins. Campbell says, “You can’t cut your throat. If you compete on price alone, it’s a race to the bottom and nobody wins.”

Surprisingly, decorators say letting a customer go to a competitor isn’t the end of the world. If they value customer service – talking to a live person when they call, collaborating with talented artists, solving problems quickly and easily, and putting a face to a name – they’ll be back. “Anybody can get the same garment, but it’s a matter of what they can do with it and the experience they’re giving the customer,” says Howard Potter, CEO of A&P Master Images in Yorkville, NY. “Our quality will outsell the competitor’s, plus we can offer an average turnaround time of two weeks, face-to-face contact, in-house custom artwork, individually bagged orders and more.”

Black Duck Inc. has so much confidence in its decorated-apparel quality that it sells art to customers who want to take their business elsewhere. “It’s much better to allow people freedom,” Campbell says. “We’ll keep their art on file for a few years so if they decide to come back, we can pick up where we left off. We know that they won’t get our quality in other places.”

3 Adding to orders.

A common issue with client approval of proofs is deciding what to do when customers request to add to an order *after* art has been approved and sometimes after production has begun.

Joyce Jagger, owner of decorator consulting business The Embroidery Coach, says the approach depends on where the order is when the request is made. “If they’re requesting a change in art before the garment has begun, charge an editing price because you’re adding more work to the project,” Jagger says. “If they speak up after approval and it’s in production, treat it like a totally new order and charge for the smaller quantity.”

Jagger has seen decorators stop production to change one order, and it throws off the timeline for days to follow. It’s not worth it. “Everything in this business is timed,” Jagger says. “Every shirt, every hat that goes through your machine is meeting a deadline. You can’t interrupt that.”

Customers don’t always realize how their request affects the process, so it’s up to the decorator to inform them and then lay out a solution. “Someone places an order and then brags about it to their friends, and all of a sudden 10 more people want in,” Potter says. “You have to sit them down and say, ‘OK, this is what we can do for you,’ and most of the time they comply with a later in-hand date or an extra charge.”

4 Color wars.

In cases where a customer chooses garment, art, or thread or ink colors that will clash, explain why something like that simply won’t look good. “Your sales reps’ knowledge is especially crucial in a situation like this,” Jagger says. “Clients need to know that some things are quite frankly impossible to create, and your

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reps need to have some quick ideas to offer to the customer."

Since many logos have trademarked colors and guidelines, the safest way for a decorator to match the design is by using PMS colors. If the customer has them on hand, stick with them. If not, either try to find the closest color and send it to them for approval, or if it's a corporate client that you know has legal requirements when it comes to color, ask them to find the PMS match before proceeding. "Sew-outs and physical samples are very important when it comes to proofing colors," Jagger says. "The colors you see on a digital or virtual sample are rarely the same when they're sewn out. We'll go back and forth several times to get the color right because that's not a mistake we're willing to make."

5 Misunderstanding decorating techniques.

Customers often misunderstand the limitations of particular decorating mediums and garments. For example, clients will ask for tiny embroidered lettering, stitching on garments that can't be hooped or fit into a machine, or they have very little understanding of the aspect ratio of an image.

"I'd say 90% of problems arise from clients trying to put too much detail and information in a small space," Campbell says. "I give people the 'handshake distance' analogy: Anything you can't read from three feet away, handshake distance, is unnecessary." When it comes to explaining these technicalities, Campbell adds, gauge your customer's interest. "I explain how big text can be, how thick thread is or how big the needle is, and a lot of people like the details," he says.

In these cases, decorators can reduce thread count by removing details or thread colors. But, be mindful of which elements can't change, so you don't waste time tweaking the wrong parts. "If a customer brings me a design with an eagle and a shield and large text under the picture, I have to know whether I can change something about the eagle, the shield or the font," Campbell says. "Switching fonts is an easy way to make more room, but if they need that font to stay the same, that's something I have to know right away."

6 Refusing setup fees.

Setup fees are associated with every decorating technique, and there are two ways to present these fees to customers. Most customers

understand that the setup fee is a one-time charge, paid in the beginning and never again if they're reordering the same design. Other customers are shocked at the price of a few screens, so decorators can distribute the money throughout the order and give the customer that per-piece price.

Another problem with embroidery is many customers' lack of knowledge about digitizing. "When we mention that a file needs to be digitized for embroidery, customers often misunderstand that as the file needing to be in a digital format, and they dispute any digitizing charges," Campbell says. "Describe the actual work that goes into it and everything that has to be done to prepare art for embroidery. They need to know that their money is going toward your labor and not some automatic program."

Over the years, Campbell has learned that clear communication is paramount, and educating customers on every aspect of the process will help in any situation. "Put samples in the showroom, tell them about setup fees upfront and be honest about what's going on," Campbell says. "Like suppliers, you need to view your customers as partners, always working toward a common goal." ●

ANDRAYA VANTREASE is a contributing writer for *Stitches*.

SIGNS YOU SHOULD DROP A CUSTOMER

If one of your repeat-problem clients is one of these types, you may want to consider severing the relationship:

1 Constantly beats you up on price.

A client who's always looking for the lowest price gets old, fast. If what you're charging is fair, they should accept it or move on. Remedy: Have one conversation where you state your company's service and value to your client and why you charge what you charge. If the price haggling continues, say the relationship is over.

2 Neglects bills. Regardless of how large the client, unpaid bills time after time aren't acceptable. Remedy: Try sending e-mail reminders in advance of the billing deadline to this client. Or, even

offer an incentive if the customer pays the bill early or on time, like 1% or 2% off their next order.

3 Consistently requires too much time. Think about the value of each transaction. Is it worth spending so much time on every one of their orders? If it is, bite the bullet, but if it isn't, don't feel bad that you have a business to run. Remedy: Build in consulting time and an additional fee for this customer if you'd like to retain his business.

4 Complains about each order despite your efforts to cooperate. This type of customer isn't one you want around. If they continue to disapprove

when you've done everything you can, maybe it's time to go. Remedy: Try being honest with the customer by saying, "Are you sure that we're the right service provider for you?" and really address the specific issues the customer has raised. He might not even realize how much he's complaining, and may back off.

5 Everyday emergencies. If a customer constantly begs you to handle "this one little order" by tomorrow without accepting rush fees, it may be time to let them ring the alarm for someone else. Remedy: Advise that you'll be instituting a hefty rush charge for each order going forward.

Swim FANS

Pitch beach- and pool-inspired promotions, resplendent in rich jewel tones, vivid patterns and stylish athletic designs, all perfect for a plethora of imprinting options.

By Sara Lavenduski
Photography: Andrew Milne

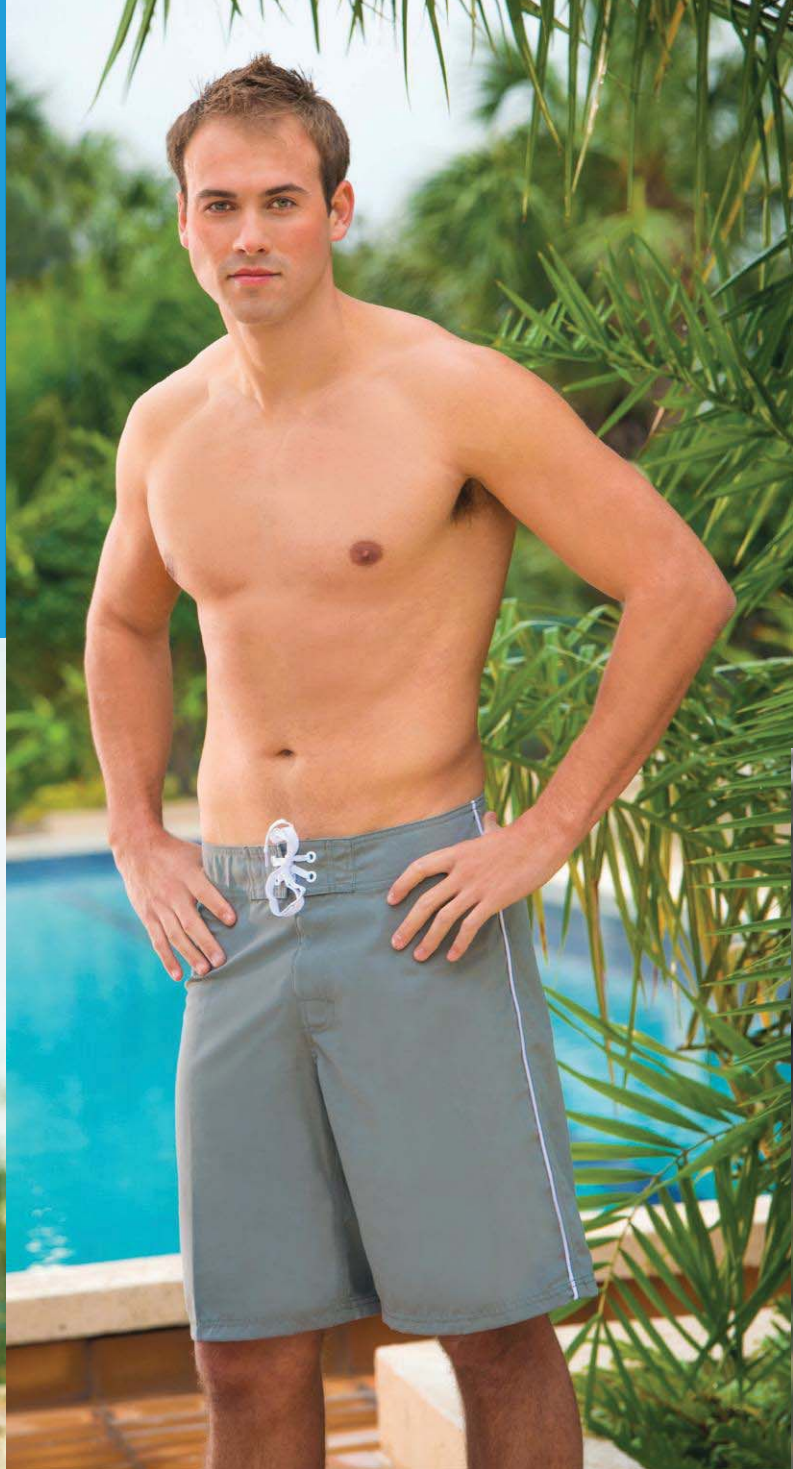
Golden Girls

Go for the pin-up girl look with this retro-inspired suit. The tankini top (3604) and matching Vegas-cut bottoms with a small skirt (4709) from Lori Coulter Made-to-Order Swimwear (circle 151 on Free Info Card) feature feminine button detailing and would look ideal with embroidery, screen printing or a heat transfer on the right leg, left chest or center back. Match the imprint with the white banding detail, or suggest a tone-on-tone imprint for subtle branding. This piece is perfect for promo girls, the collegiate market, and resort and spa promotions.

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Tropical Breeze

A well-fitting suit makes all the difference for superior brand promotion. Look for quality items, like this molded cup tankini (3604_D3) and matching low-rise bottoms (4711) in Curacao from Lori Coulter Made-to-Order Swimwear (circle 151 on Free Info Card). For branding, consider a variety of embellishment methods, from embroidery, heat transfers and screen printing to crystals and fabric appliqués on the center chest, left hip or center back. Match the imprint to the banding detail, or use a tone-on-tone embellishment for a more subtle look for upscale hospitality promotions.



One For The Team

Take the sports look to the beach with athletics-inspired items that include accent piping and contrasting grommets. Pitch to the college market, outdoor clubs and swim clubs; these garments would make attractive uniforms for lifeguards and staff at pools, spas and water parks as well. You can easily match a neutral hue with a colorful rash guard, cotton tee or tank and flip-flops. This pair of 100% polyester super-suede microfiber boardshorts (MB-200G) from Wet Effect (*asi/98103*; circle 170 on Free Info Card) would look ideal with screen printing or embroidery on the left hip, left bottom leg or center back.

Pretty In Pink

Increase brand exposure by combining an imprinted, vividly colored cover-up in a jewel tone with a neutral swimsuit. This antimicrobial Sublimated Sporty bikini (2175) from Bishop the Garment Co. (*asi/40585*; circle 171 on Free Info Card) is made especially for sublimation. "You can also screen print or embroider it," says Monika Rene, customer service representative at Bishop. "It's functional, sexy and sporty, which makes it a great piece with which to promote any brand. It's often used by liquor brands, but it could also be a summer giveaway or a uniform for a promo girl." This bright pink polyester/spandex rash guard (RG-100P), featuring a crew neck and longer length, is available from Wet Effect (*asi/98103*; circle 170 on Free Info Card). Add matching imprinted flip-flops, like these Key West sandals (KEYW) from Neet Feet (*asi/73525*; circle 172 on Free Info Card) for event promotion and a sport watch to round out the look. This digital watch (REL9136) from Redline (*asi/81133*; circle 173 on Free Info Card) includes date and alarm functionality and is waterproof up to 30 meters.



Genuine Issue

From camo patterns to Castro-style caps to army green apparel, the military look is still taking the retail and promotional markets by storm. This polyester/spandex rash guard (RG-100G) from Wet Effect (*asi/98103*; circle 170 on Free Info Card) is perfect for early mornings shredding the surf and provides a generous imprint area for surfing teams or fitness companies and events. It's matched with a patterned pair of 100% polyester boardshorts (MAS022) from Harvest Industrial & Trade Co. Ltd. (*asi/61670*; circle 174 on Free Info Card). "We recommend bold embroidery so the logo will stand out within the stripe pattern," says Sales Manager Ben Menendez. "Consider these shorts for hospitality clients." Finish off the military style with a set of aviators (PRO-AV) from Fields Manufacturing (*asi/54100*; circle 175 on Free Info Card) that feature a thin black metal wraparound frame and UV-protection lenses.

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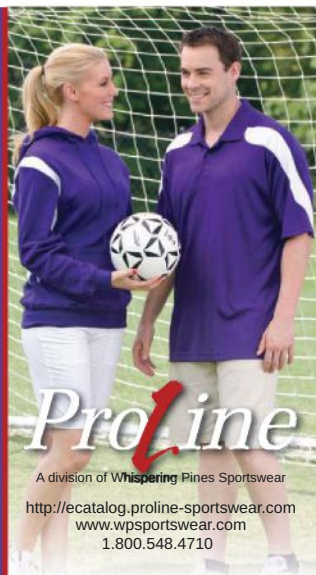
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COMING NEXT ISSUE

What's coming up in May *Stitches*

by Nicole Rollender

Stitches State of the Industry Report 2013

• We've got a comprehensive business-improvement guide to help you grow your decorator business in 2013 and beyond. Read the exclusive results of our exhaustive survey of Stitches readers about their businesses and the industry in 2012,

including our brand-new regional breakdown of some of the hottest trends in the decorated-apparel market. Plus, check out who's on our 2013 Top Apparel Suppliers List.



Find the Right Garment Printer

• Our experts will share how to find the right printer for your shop – and how

other decorators are using the affordable equipment to turn a nice profit.

Plus ...

- How to mimic the look of raw-edge reverse appliqué
- Women's apparel showcase
- Hot niche embellishments: fitness apparel
- The latest from *Stitches'* Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest sites

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 March/April 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., Trevose, 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 March/April needle are due by April 19, 2013. From the correct responses, we'll randomly select one winner who'll receive a \$100 gift certificate, courtesy of **MADERA** Laconia, NH. Please submit only one entry per drawing. We'll announce the winner in the June issue.

Slick Is Loving L.A.

In the January issue, Slick hid in Chris Ruvo's feature article, "City of Angels and Apparel," on page 63, right underneath the farthest-right photo of apparel designers, sewers and embroiderers. Carol Lilley of Geigertown, PA-based Haycreek Creations was chosen at random from a grand total of 40 responses. As this issue's winner, Carol will receive Madeira USA's gift certificate. Keep your eyes peeled for the industry's favorite game of hide and seek!



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ASK AN EXPERT

By Erich Campbell

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next issue, you'll learn how to choose the right direct-to-garment printer for your shop. See you next issue!

Q *I'm an embroiderer with steady custom work and a clientele who cares about quality and wants to be a part of the creative process. I think it's time to bring my digitizing in-house. What skills should I look for in a digitizer? What are the key questions to ask in the interview? What kinds of samples should I ask for? How can I make sure I have the quality I need to be confident in offering this service?*

As an in-house digitizer myself, I know nobody will be surprised if I endorse your decision. Deciding to hire a digitizer is the easy part; evaluating creative staff isn't ever entirely straightforward. Sample embroideries tell a great deal, but some skills can be hard to quantify. That said, with a few fairly simple questions and a careful evaluation of their work, you should be able to judge any candidate's fit for your organization. There are three critical areas you need to flesh out: experience with workflow and equipment, technical and artistic ability, and the somewhat less concrete, but no less important matter of digitizing style.

Start with the practical: How much experience does your candidate have in the industry? How long has he digitized? Has she ever operated commercial embroidery machines for production? Is your prospect familiar with the sort of software you have or are willing to purchase? If you have any specialty machines/

accessories, has she digitized with those in mind, or is she knowledgeable enough to learn? Whether or not your prospect is qualified on all of your equipment, these questions are likely to determine whether or not he has experi-

Does he have experience working directly from photographs? Can she render specialty niche designs, such as animals, automotive designs, architectural work or decorative patterns for interior design? If needed, can he create a rendering of a

artistic sensibilities. You can tell a great deal from unmounted sample stitch-outs your digitizer candidate gives you.

However, the only way to fully assess a digitizer's work is to run the designs yourself. Designs are sometimes

“Can she render specialty niche designs, such as animals, automotive designs, architectural work or decorative patterns for interior design?”

ence that might help him get quickly up to speed.

Build on those foundational answers with technical and artistic questions ranging from assessment of techniques to questions about your prospect's personal style. Is she proficient at production-conscious digitizing – for example, does she digitize to minimize stitch count, run and finishing time? Does he have proficiency in techniques related to your market that go beyond standard left-chest logos, flat cap fronts and standard jacket backs?

Now, you can expand to artistic and stylistic concerns, focusing on skills that complement your shop's offerings and the styles that appeal to your customers. Can your candidate draw vector art and/or design his own art for embroidery?

design/garment combination from a customer's directions?

Include specific stylistic questions as well: Does he digitize sculpturally, or does he favor flat fills? Does she use many colors in each design, or can she work well with limited palettes – this is important for efficiency, or essential depending on the limitations of your machinery?

Last, and arguably most critical, is the work review. Though not all digitizers can easily provide physical samples of their work, make certain they can provide at least a few digitized files of various styles, sizes and applications for sampling. These files should ideally be paired with original artwork to allow you an insight into their ability to interpret art into stitches as well as their

adjusted from machine to machine and their sample may not stitch perfectly with your materials if it's adjusted to another combination of such, but running them allows you to evaluate some of the most basic and necessary complements of any digitizer's skill set.

So long as you check for core competencies and think ahead about where you expect your new digitizer to fit into your business plan, the process shouldn't be much harder than any other hire.

ERICH CAMPBELL, an industry veteran, is an award-winning embroidery digitizer with experience in designing, implementing and maintaining e-commerce websites. A longtime technology fan, ad-hoc IT staffer and constantly-connected Internet dweller, Campbell is in the process of adding social media to the marketing arsenal of Albuquerque, NM-based Black Duck Inc. Contact: ecampbell@blackduckinc.com.

GOT A DECORATOR DILEMMA?

E-mail your question to nrollender@asicentral.com. We'll request your permission to print your question and our expert's response in *Stitches*. Note: Unfortunately, we're unable to answer each individual question.

Just the Right Solution for Your Business Start!

The biggest with the most varieties of single head range on the market !



- **High Productivity and embroidery quality**
- **More powerful New touch operation box**
 - Upgraded memory capacity : 10,000,000 stitches
 - 4 USB ports
 - Multi-tasking function
 - Supporting multi-media data
- **Compact machine size & Wide embroidery range**
- **Automatic thread tension control** (optional device)



MAN-12



E-T1201C



E-T1501



E-U1201

"A SWF single head machine is ideal for both start up and established embroiderers."

THEY ARE THE BEST !

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- Automatic thread tension control device
- Design analysis
- Automatic profit forecast
- Productivity prediction function
- Making a worksheet on-line
- Real-time monitoring



SDMSII is applicable to all models

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Experience SWF's Revolutionizing Business Solutions!

Focus on the effect of **SDMS II**

- Optimal machine performance through virtual analysis of SDMSII data
- Real time monitoring of nearly all aspects of products
- More efficient after-sales service and SDMSII guided self repairs
- New operation box - Easy & convenience design editing function
- Upgraded memory capacity : 10,000,000 stitches
- Automatic thread tension control device - Improved and uniformed embroidery quality

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- Uniquely designs high speed color change system
- Robust construction than other manufactures (Vibration free operation)

Exclusive to SWF



K DUAL SERIES

- Pump auto lubrication
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