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THE EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITY www.wearablesmag.com

August 2013

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and one fashion
faux pas to avoid

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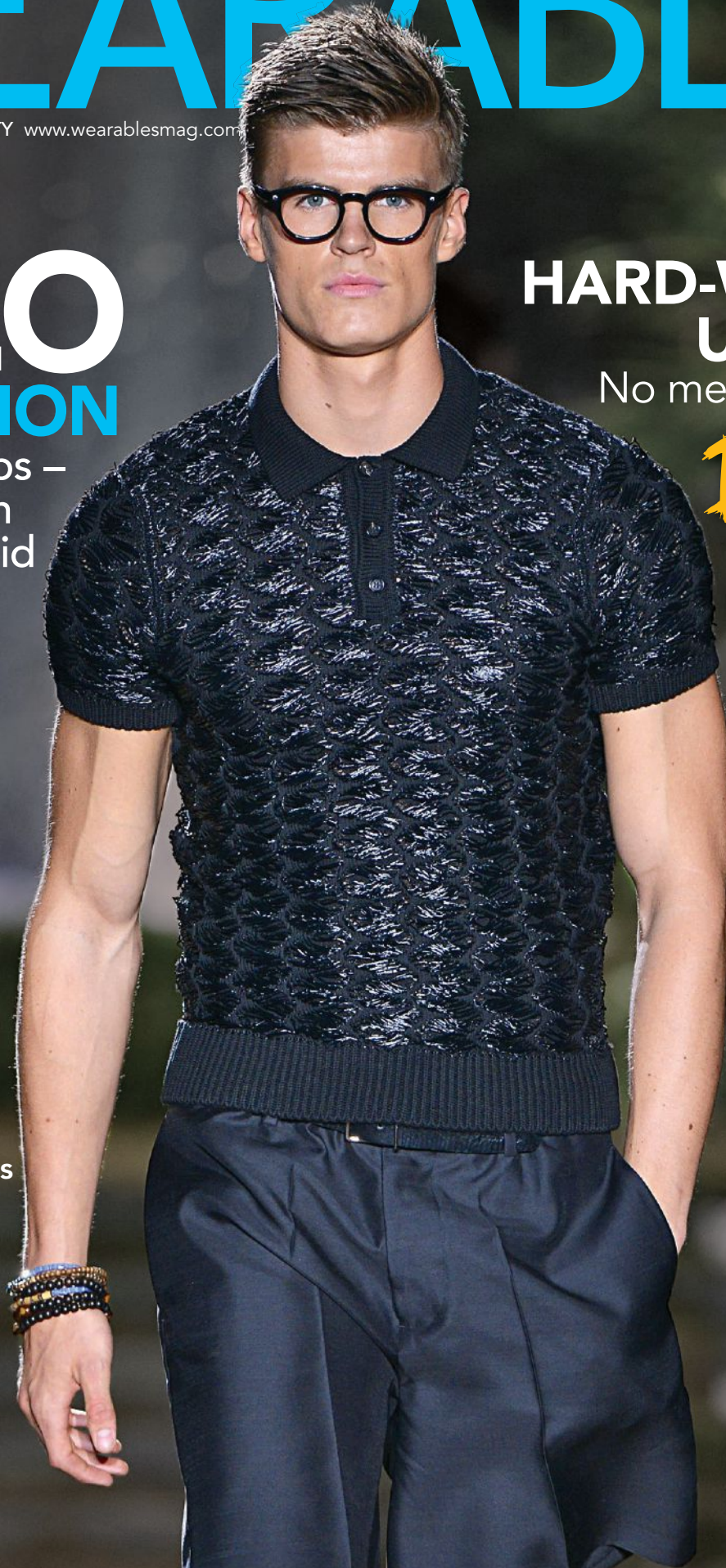
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A Friend in Need

No item straddles the line between corporate and casual better than a polo. Here are the best sales tips for this branded apparel workhouse, as well as a look at its storied history and today's defining styles.

BY C.J. MITTICA, GRACE BENNETT
AND CHUCK ZAK



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Dirty Jobs: Uniforms Edition

The only thing that works harder than the people we feature in our Dirty Jobs series is the rugged uniforms they were. We once again look at the apparel that is worn in these hands-on professions and find your next add-on opportunity.

BY C.J. MITTICA, SARA LAVENDUSKI,
CHRISTOPHER RUVO AND CHUCK ZAK



[SCREEN-PRINTING SUCCESS]

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Logo or No Go?

Customer-supplied logos can be a major hurdle for a screen-printing job. We review the five steps decorators must take to make sure the logos they receive are in tip-top shape.

BY THOMAS TRIMINGHAM

Performance and striped polos are two of the definitive styles of this classic apparel item. (From top to bottom) Men's slim-fit performance polo (CL-3) available from Stormtech (asi/89864; circle 119 on Free Info Card) and IZOD 100% polyester striped polo (13Z0112) available from S&S Activewear (asi/84358; circle 118 on Free Info Card).



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Designer: Hillary Haught. Image from Getty Images.

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We've got lots of online exclusives, such as fun and informative videos at *wearablesmag.com*, online courses and webinars on *asicentral.com* and social media chatter on Facebook and Twitter.



VIDEO: Life's A Beach. Summer is going strong, Which means beach apparel and accessories are in demand. *Wearables* Editor C.J. Mittica shows off the latest products that are ready-made for the sand and the shore.



VIDEO: Stretch Out With Neoprene. Used in everything from industrial linings to wetsuits, neoprene is just about as durable and versatile as fabrics come. *Wearables* Editor C.J. Mittica discusses what makes this fabric so great in the latest edition of Ask The Expert.

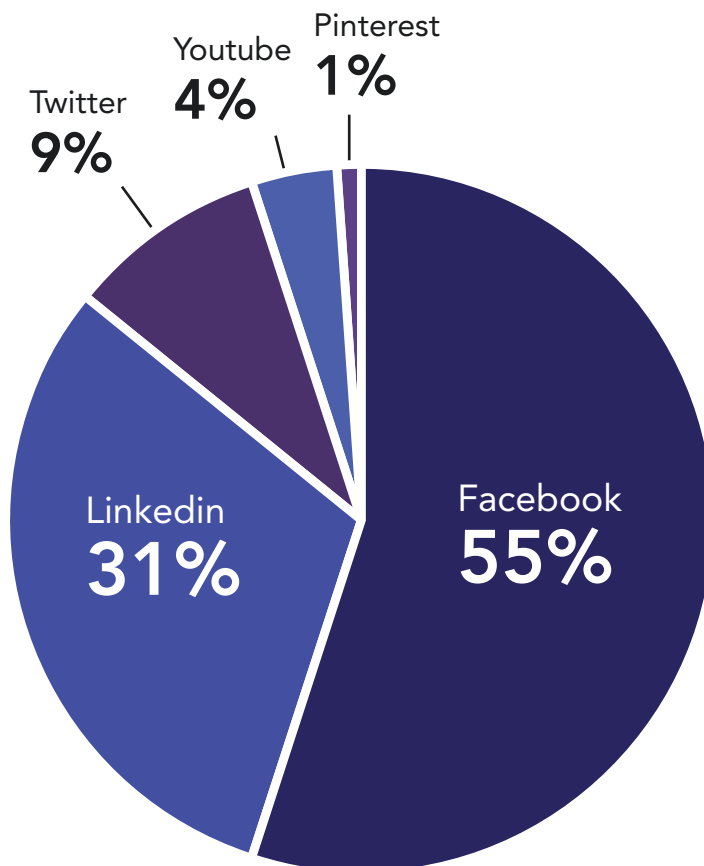
Have a question you want answered in a future edition of Ask the Expert? Send it to Editor C.J. Mittica at cmittica@asicentral.com.



VIDEO: Summer Cool. *Wearables* Managing Editor Joe Haley always has the scoop on the newest and coolest products. Go to asicentral.com/videos to see the latest products he has to show.

ONLINE POLL

On *ASICentral.com*, we asked, "Which Social Network Do You Use Most For Business?"



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apparel orders; beat other competitors who cut their prices; and work more like a consultant than just a “stuff seller.” To listen to this webinar, Visit <http://bit.ly/16oomir> or go to asicentral.com/education.



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PODCAST: Wake-Up Right. Tune into ASI Radio’s Tuesday Morning Show throughout August for fun and insights into everything from how to grow your sales to live call-ins from *Counselor’s* Best Places to Work Road Tour. To get business-building tips from every episode, head to www.asicentral.com/radio.



NEWSLETTER: Make It Work. Major regulation changes through OSHA have given a major boon to the workwear category. We review what those changes mean as well as the top selling strategies to target this lucrative market. Check out our *Wearables* style E-newsletter for more.

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It's Gotta Be the Shoes

BY C.J. MITTICA



"I'm definitely wearing the wrong shoes." That was my first thought as I began to man a lawnmower for my landscaping profile as part of our Dirty Jobs series. I was spending the morning with Bill Clark & Son Landscaping, a Philadelphia-based company that does everything from cutting lawns to building rock walls. After spending the first two lawns observing and feeling like a useless fifth wheel, I ask Bill Clark Jr. (a friend and softball teammate of mine) if I can take a whack at it. He gestures to a push mower, gives me a quick tutorial and I'm on my way ... to slipping and sliding down a hill.

As I learned quickly, hills are tough. "They're the worst," says Joe Farrell, a newer member of the crew and my mower compadre at this house. You can't mow them up and down because the blade will burn out the grass and leave a brown spot when you reach the top. Rather, you have to go side to side – and who even walks along the middle of a hill, let alone push an unwieldy mower?

And that's where my footwear choice betrays me. For the day I throw on a well-worn pair of sneakers that I wouldn't mind getting dirty. Cutting in a straight path is futile with its non-existent grip; the wavering grass lines make it seem like Amanda Bynes was behind the wheel. Of course, the rest of the crew knows better. They're all wearing hiking boots.



We all know that to do the job right, you need the right tools. And as I quickly learned, that includes wearing the right clothing. It's a point we come to time and time again with our Dirty Jobs series. For the third year, we followed around professionals who aren't afraid to get their hands dirty. We show what they do on the job, the clothing they wear and the add-on opportunities that are there for the taking. Workwear continues to be a lucrative market, and now is as good a time as ever to find niches that will bolster your bottom line.

To extend the metaphor, in business there are plenty of times when you have to engage in your own version of "dirty work." Tasks like fixing up customer logos, picking out new equipment or learning better leadership skills aren't glamorous, but they are key traits that ensure a business is healthy and well. We cover those topics and more in this month's issue. Here's to digging in to get the job done.

Thanks for reading,

Charles J. Mittica

WHAT'S IN MY CLOSET?

Each issue, we ask our readers a simple question: What is your favorite branded apparel item in your closet? Send in a photo of you and your favorite garment, and tell us in a paragraph why you love it. We run one submission each issue, and that lucky winner receives a \$25 Visa Gift card.

This issue, our submission comes from Adam Brown, account relationship manager for Motivators Promotional Products (asi/277780):

"I have been a promotional consultant here at Motivators for almost five years. Needless to say in that time I have done a ton of orders, specifically a ton of apparel orders. My favorite though is this simple-looking, yet quite creative, yellow, orange and black T-shirt. I was working with one of my favorite customers, a local theme park called Adventureland. It is actually the theme park the movie of the same name is based on. They had created a mascot named Alfie and had recently been doing a push to promote him. We created this T-shirt from a SanMar (asi/84863) Port and Company Cotton Essential T-Shirt to feature the logo from his chest. Now kids and adults alike who were fans of his could look just like him! Instant hit!"





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FASHIONSENSE

Hot apparel, style how-tos and need-to-know trends

BY ALISSA TALLMAN



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HOT HUE

White

White should never be underestimated when it comes to apparel – particularly this summer, where it's made a major comeback on the runway. The latest designs from Reed Krakoff feature a refreshing variety of whites paired with other neutrals, and Dolce & Gabbana's gorgeous white dresses stamped with dramatic floral prints are stunning. Timeless and classic, white is stupendous on its own or in consort with other colors, especially brights, which are also in vogue this season.

"White is normally associated with a certain freshness, and is bright without being overpowering," says Monika Rene, customer-service representative at Bishop The Garment Co. (*asi/40585*). "Such qualities are ideal when it comes to a promotional campaign." She mentions white's remarkable ability to project both color and graphics. "White acts like a blank canvas that showcases the brand identity applied to it," she says, "providing the perfect background to exhibit text or imagery."

Nancy Robitaille, apparel and headwear designer for Fersten Worldwide Inc. (*asi/53974*), reminds us that white remains a longtime symbol of warm weather. "White is the epitome of the summer season – it comes across as being clean, fresh and bright after a long winter of dull blacks and grays," she says. Her suggestions for adopting the neutral into a wardrobe? Layer white on white "for a slimming, tonal look" or use a splash for something bolder.

Fashion Tip

Pair white bottoms with any colorful print for an outstanding summer outfit. Stripes and florals are two favorite prints among women, and color-blocked designs are currently popular for men.





← Tank Dress

Bishop the Garment Co. (asi/40585; circle 93 on Free Info Card) distributes this unique one-shoulder sublimated tank dress (2160), dubbed the "Elena."



← Button-Down

Ash City (asi/37143; circle 91 on Free Info Card) carries this smart-looking women's striped poplin shirt (78674) featuring front princess seams for a flattering fit.



← Shorts

These sporty men's sateen Bermuda shorts (FA8040) are made of a cotton/spandex blend and can be found at Fersten Worldwide Inc. (asi/53974; circle 92 on Free Info Card).



← Poncho

You can find this super-comfy eco-friendly women's sleeveless poncho (1936E1) at Alternative Apparel (asi/34850; circle 94 on Free Info Card).

TREND SPY

1980s Apparel

Retro-styled apparel is ubiquitous this summer, especially the bright colors, wild prints and unique apparel trends that harken back to the 1980s. Whether your client's favorite throwback style involves neon, long tees or sweaters or an oversized plastic watch, you're bound to find plenty of it this season.

"All good trends cycle around," says Mary Ellen Nichols, director of marketing communications for Bodek and Rhodes (*asi/40788*). "The styles of the 1980s are no exception." She provides some examples: "The flowy, sexy *Flashdance* necklines that once bared women's shoulders have returned for young women with a style vengeance. Dolman sleeves as well as extra-loose tops and bottoms and sheer, billowy fabrics are hot this year and finally making it into the decorated-apparel spotlight." Men's styles

are also a current hit, she says. "Tight-fitted men's tees are all the rage. Present designs usually have more sophisticated, V-neck styling than the originals and are made with sumptuous soft cottons, tri-blends or burnouts."

Another definite 1980s trend that's being revamped involves color. "The brighter, the better!" Nichols says. "Neons are definitely back, along with happy stand-out colors, all of which are complemented by sleek blacks and navies, just as we saw 30 years ago."

Eighties retro trends are applicable across industry lines and age groups; optimistic, youthful and featuring an upbeat color palette, they're perfect for everything from company marketing to fundraising events and even logo applications. Adults will adore these trends for their nostalgic properties, while kids and teens will take to their lively and whimsical traits.

Fashion Tip

Just a touch of the '80s can make any outfit edgy and effective; examples include a neon scarf or sunglasses or an oversized shirt with cigarette pants.



Sunglasses

These fun neon Nike shades (EV0615-656) are available through Driving Impressions (*asi/50864*; circle 98 on Free Info Card).



Tunic

Get It Global (*asi/56712*; circle 99 on Free Info Card) carries this totally '80s- women's tunic (GIG-32B) with slightly squared shoulders.



Watch

Tornado Promotions (*asi/91541*; circle 97 on Free Info Card) distributes this perfectly Swatch-esque watch (SMG135).



Running Shorts

You can find these color-blocked running shorts (YN64V-L) at Boxercraft (*asi/41325*; circle 100 on Free Info Card) in vivid violet/lime, electric blue/lime, fuchsia/gray and lime/fuchsia.

Celebrity Style

Look to Hollywood for stylish ideas on how to wear comfortable trends.

Avril Lavigne ▶

This rock star shows notable skill for knowing how to integrate multiple apparel trends in one outfit. Metallic fabrics, especially for pants and leggings, are immensely popular right now, plus her sequined vest and studded pumps sport just the right amount of embellished "bling." American Apparel (asi/35297) carries similar leggings with a metallic sheen, and In Your Face Apparel (asi/62494) specializes in custom-made embellished designs.



Photographer: Jason Laveris

Nikolaj Coster-Waldau ▶

This *Game of Thrones* and *Oblivion* star gives a nod to futuristic fashion styles with this sharp suit featuring a sheeny metallic fabric. He also uses neutrals wisely and adds a nice hint of color with a red tie. Assertive Creativity LLC (asi/37166) distributes several suits with this modern fabric twist, and check out Tornado Promotions (asi/91541) for an impressive assortment of quality ties.



Photographer: Jeffrey Mayer

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STYLE TIPS

Appliqués and Embellishments

Tis the season to embellish, as high-end designers such as Chloe, Valentino, Moschino and Louis Vuitton have so graciously done in their spring/summer 2013 collections. Whether it's adding metal accents to high-heeled boots, colorful gemstones to handbags or fancy embroidery to skirts and dresses, today's top fashion gurus are implementing this style with inspired zest.

Lori Janke, art director for Art Unlimited Sportswear (asi/36978), states that embellished apparel within the promotional arena continues to enjoy consistent success, especially in the wake of its popularity within high fashion and the retail industry. "Customers are always looking for something different," she says. "Trying new types of fabrics, colors and unusual textures is always a great idea." One superb feature of appliquéd and embellished apparel is that it adds a three-dimensional, tactile aspect to a product. "Appliqué and

embellishments make people want to touch and feel the decoration and determine how it was created," Janke says.

She mentions a few embellishment trends she's been witnessing within the promotional market. "Appliquéd apparel is still a hot item for decorators," she says, "and distressed appliqué is very popular for customers looking for fashion-forward designs. Multimedia designs are also appealing." She suggests incorporating more than one embellishment technique as a way to differentiate your company or brand from another. "Mixing appliqué, embroidery, print and even rhinestones can distinguish your design and logo from the ordinary," she says.

Because appliqué and embellishment types range so widely, they can be applied to several types of industries. Depending on the price point, such products make excellent giveaways and employee gifts for both men and women.

Fashion Tip

When putting together an outfit featuring embellished apparel, keep the embellishment type consistent throughout for a standout effect.



Flip-Flops

Assertive Creativity (asi/37166; circle 101 on Free Info Card) carries these rubber flip-flops (P-1201-WSLB) with embedded glitter, decorative flower and treaded sole.



Pet Collars

Matias Imports (asi/69571; circle 102 on Free Info Card) carries these adorable personalized leather pet collars (MTI101880) embellished with rhinestones.



Hoodie

Art Unlimited Sportswear (asi/36978; circle 103 on Free Info Card) embellished this color-blocked vintage hoodie, made of 80% cotton and 20% polyester, with distressed appliqué and embroidery.



Handbag

This fantastic studded faux-leather handbag is available at McKlein Co. LLC (asi/70053; circle 104 on Free Info Card).

TRADE SHOW CALENDAR

AUGUST

Aug. 4-6, Las Vegas
ISS Shows
(508) 743-0532;
www.issshows.com

Aug. 7-8, Long Beach, CA
The SAAC Show
(805) 484-7393;
www.saac.net

Aug. 12, Dallas
Promotions Southwest
(800) 546-3300;
www.advantagesroadshow.com

Aug. 13-15, Shreveport, LA; Jackson, MS; New Orleans
Advantages Roadshow
(800) 546-3300;
www.advantagesroadshow.com

Aug. 14, Knoxville, TN
PPAMS Knoxville Road Show
(615) 465-8109; www.ppams.com

Aug. 22, Bloomington, MN
UMAPP Selling Solutions Showcase Room Show
(651) 734-9767;
www.umapp.org

Aug. 24-27, Ft. Lauderdale
Fort Lauderdale Gift Show
(678) 285-3976;
www.ftlauderdalegiftshow.com

Aug. 25-28, Marlboro, MA
New England Apparel Club Show
(781) 326-9223;
www.neacshow.com

SEPTEMBER

Sept. 16-19, Raleigh, Charlotte, Atlanta, Nashville
Advantages Roadshow
(800) 546-3300;
www.advantagesroadshow.com

Sept. 17-20, Las Vegas
Las Vegas Souvenir & Resort Gift Show
(678) 285-3976;
www.lvsouvenirshow.com

Sept. 26-28, Fort Worth, TX
ISS Shows
(508) 743-0532;
www.issshows.com

Sept. 30-Oct. 4, Van Nuys, Ontario, Newport Beach, San Diego, Phoenix
Advantages Roadshow
(800) 546-3300;
www.advantagesroadshow.com

OCTOBER

Oct. 13-15, Galveston Island, TX
Galveston Gift & Resort Merchandise Show
(678) 285-3976;
www.galvestongiftshow.com

Oct. 14-18, Milwaukee, Chicago, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Columbus
Advantages Roadshow
(800) 546-3300;
www.advantagesroadshow.com

Oct. 20-23, Marlboro, MA
New England Apparel Club Show
(781) 326-9223;
www.neacshow.com

NOVEMBER

Nov. 5-8, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Burlington
Advantages Roadshow
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www.advantagesroadshow.com

Alissa Tallman is a contributing writer for Wearables.

Asi/69885

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LOOKS WE LOVE

Baseball Jacket

Baseball jackets continue to be in vogue in both high fashion and retail. They're ideal for the promotional arena because they serve a functional role as a major component of athletic teamwear while making a fashion statement. This men's baseball jacket (09589EC) from Alternative Apparel (asi/34850; circle 94 on Free Info Card) is an excellent addition to the current baseball jacket inventory available for promotional wear: It's lightweight and has a great vintage look, plus it's super-comfortable, as it's made from what Alternative dubs "eco-cashmere" – a blend of partly recycled polyester, organic cotton and rayon. It's available in eco gray, eco true navy and eco true vintage black and features stylish contrast piping. Add a logo to the front or even the back to create a fantastic look with apparel of all types.



Outdoor Company Event:

With a stylish shirt and pants; add this classy hat (Boss) from Sunday Afternoons Inc. (asi/90134; circle 109 on Free Info Card). This ensemble is chock-full of style, looks great and is comfortable enough for a picnic or a cookout with coworkers. The hat will keep the wearer cool in the sun.



Resort Staff Uniform:

Pair the jacket with this short-sleeve poplin button-down (7130) from River's End Trading Company (asi/82588; circle 105 on Free Info Card) and these rugged twill work pants (100095) from Broberry Mfg. Inc. (asi/42057; circle 106 on Free Info Card). This outfit provides a crisp and clean look for employees while giving them a noticeable edge that most uniforms don't have. Include the company logo on the jacket as well as the shirt and offer each style as a promotional gift item.

Camp Director:

This sleeveless tee (N7117) from Broder Bros. Co. (asi/42090; circle 107 on Free Info Card) can go under the jacket along with these infantry shorts (2547) from Rothco (asi/83708; circle 108 on Free Info Card). This outfit is comfortable and trendy, yet authoritative enough to command campers' attention. It also allows for plenty of flexibility and movement needed on the job. Imprint the camp logo on the tee and the jacket and present both as giveaway items for various camp events.

ACCESSORIES

Tote Bags

The summer is awash with amazingly stylish tote bag designs, from Max Mara's luxurious fur and animal-print bags to Armani's newest totes in sleek neutrals and Emilio Pucci's artful floral-print bags. Considered more than mere accessories these days, tote bags showcase some of the most extraordinary patterns presently trending in the fashion world.

Jenny Straub, marketing and product development coordinator for Vitronic Promotional Group (asi/93990), cites color blocking as a highly significant tote trend. "If you follow fashion, you know that color blocking is everywhere and predicted to remain strong into fall," she says. "With its clean lines and pops of color, this trend is fairly simple to incorporate as a tote bag design." The aesthetic is part of a continued movement toward bold and bright patterns. "Color choice has quickly become an extension of a customer's personality and branding," says Sharon

Tennyson, owner of LBD Promos (asi/67735).

Design trends don't just apply to pattern. Size matters too.

"We're still seeing small totes, but big bags are coming on strong," says Tennyson. Functionality is important as well, and clients in different markets have specific needs that can be met by customizing bags with extra pockets and durable materials.

Tennyson stresses the importance of keeping up on current fashion trends and applying them to one's inventory: "Stay unique and distribute oversized bags with retail-oriented and fashion-forward style options. Take a client's personality into consideration and enhance it using color, size and pattern." Her suggestions for the kinds of extra features end-users want include built-in coolers, lots of pockets, waterproof linings, shoulder straps, patterns, zipper pulls, and more.

Fashion Tip
Totes offer a perfect opportunity for adding a touch of color to an outfit that's based on neutrals.



Color-Blocked Tote

Take a look at Vitronic Promotional Group (asi/93990; circle 95 on Free Info Card) for several high-contrast color-blocked designs, including this one (A838), available in lime, red, blue or gray.



Shopping Tote

This charming white and black shopping tote (SCTOTMT7) can be found at LBD Promos (asi/67735; circle 96 on Free Info Card).



Sport Tote

Leed's (asi/66887; circle 96 on Free Info Card) distributes this attractive sport tote (3006-99) in blue, lime or pink.



Eco-Leather Tote

This smashing eco-leather tote (HR23203T) is available through Tornado Promotions (asi/91541; circle 97 on Free Info Card) in turquoise, black, blue or gray.

I Believe...

The who, what and wear of industry experts

BY JOHN RESNICK, AS TOLD TO CHRISTOPHER RUVO



John Resnick

- President/Partner at Proforma Printing & Promotion (asi/300271)
- Twice named to the Inc. 5000 list
- 2012 *Boston Business Journal* Pacesetter Award Winner
- 2011 Runner-up for *Advantages* Sales Superstar of the Year

... The blend trend will grow: I'm seeing strong interest in T-shirts that are a blend of cotton and polyester. It's all about performance! But clients want the comfort factor, and they're willing to pay for both.

... Content really is king: To be successful with your marketing, you have to provide content that is relevant. You don't want to always be selling; it will turn people off. I like to make content a mix of product samples we have created, industry articles, news, trends and some personal tidbits.

... 'Old School' is cool: When it comes to apparel decoration, we'll continue to see a need for vintage and distressed designs. Customers are really gravitating toward retro right now. For many, the standard silkscreen or left chest embroidery is boring.

... Boston Strong is much more than a slogan: I'm based in Boston. When the tragic bombing occurred at the marathon this year, I was two blocks from the bomb zone. It was difficult for sure. In the aftermath, it was tough to call on clients or prospects because it just didn't feel right. We've had to go through a bit of a mental recovery. Still, it was also amazing to see how everyone – from clients to suppliers – were all checking in on each other to make sure everyone was safe. The amount of support we were shown was incredible. Boston is a resilient city that has bounced back well. We'll continue to be BOSTON STRONG!

... You have to raise the bar: The barrier to enter the ad specialty market is non-existent. Any Jane or Joe off the street can compete for business whether they know what they are doing or not. So now, more than ever before, it's important to focus on industry knowledge and customer service. Spending our investment dollars is critical, too. I'll spend the money to decorate a client or prospect's logo in a unique, differentiating way because I know it will separate us from the competition. I want prospects and clients to jump out of their chairs when they see cool, fun products and decoration.

... Family matters most: I work in a family business with my father and brother. Sharing successes with them and the family is awesome. Without having someone to share your successes, life can be a little bit empty.

... "Between the hedges" is a great place to be! I'm a huge fan of the Georgia Bulldogs. I try to visit Athens every year for a game

"I'll spend the money to decorate a client or prospect's logo in a unique, differentiating way because I know it will separate us from the competition."

which, as they say at UGA, is played "between the hedges." How did a Boston guy become a devotee of the Dawgs? The short answer is they always seemed to be on television.

... Quality leads to loyalty: Back in 2010, we designed a T-shirt for a client in the beverage industry for them to sell at retail. To this day, it remains their number one resale apparel item. We continue to print it.

... Pops is tops: The person that has had the most influence on me is, for sure, my dad. He overcame so much adversity in life. I can't thank him enough for everything he has done for me.

... ROI should never be an afterthought: I'm a finance guy by trade. I look at everything analytically. I'm always thinking about ROI with the products we help clients select. It has to be a win-win situation for us and them. I take great pride when I help clients efficiently spend their money for their best ROI.

... The puck stops here: When I'm not working, you'll probably find me watching or playing hockey. I started playing at age 5 and continued through college. The courage and determination of the players makes hockey so unique. It represents the ultimate will to win!



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CHEAT SHEET

From novice to expert in five questions

By Shane Dale

TANK TOPS

1 Why are tank tops so popular right now?

Mark Seymour, vice president of sales for Next Level Apparel (*asi/73867*), continues to add tank tops to his product line, and consumers keep eating them up.

“For both men and women, it’s absolutely blown up,” he says. “From the men’s standpoint, I think there was a void for a while because the tank top offerings that were out there were a little dated-looking, and I think the fact that fashion caught up with it had something to do with it. On the women’s side, it is probably a little more driven on the fashion end. For the longest time, the only tank top out there was that beater tank, but it had limitations in terms of embellishment, and the women’s market wanted another product.”

“For both men and women, tank tops have absolutely blown up.”

Mark Seymour, Next Level Apparel (*asi/73867*)



Cotton tanks remain the preference for men. This men's jersey tank from Next Level Apparel (*asi/73867*; circle 110 on Free Info Card) is made from 100% cotton and comes in 15 colors, including three with contrast binding around the arms and neck.



Women favor tank tops with a little bit of stretch to them, which is why Next Level Apparel (*asi/73867*; circle 110 on Free Info Card) has debuted this jersey tank (3533) made from a combed cotton, polyester and spandex blend.

2 What fabrics are in, and do men and women prefer different ones?

Scott Marino, president of Neon Tees (*asi/73583*), says 100% cotton is his best tank top seller. “It’s a summertime product, so they’re looking for something that’s breathable,” he says.

On the other hand, the majority of tanks sold by Morey Mayeri, president of Royal Apparel (*asi/83731*), are 50/50 cotton/poly blends, along with tri-blends, which feature 50% polyester along with cotton and a small amount of rayon. “It gives it a really vintage, cool, throwback gym T-shirt look,” he says. “It’s a much more defined, heathered look on the tri-blend.”

Seymour finds that tank fabric preferences break down along gender lines. Men gravitate toward Next Level’s 100% cotton offerings, while women will wear anything from a burnout 65/35 poly/cotton blend to a cotton/poly/spandex blend. “The real thing on the women’s side is, they want a form-fitting, comfortable tank top, but it has to have some stretch to it,” Seymour says. “You can achieve that stretch by putting some spandex in it, which we did with our jersey tank, or you do it with a burnout, which obviously has some stretch to it because of the nature of what you’ve done to the fabric.”

While men’s tank tops often come in a single style, there are multiple fabric variations and cuts for women. But Seymour says interest is trending across the board for all styles – including the supplier’s burnout racerback tank (6533), which Seymour says has increased in sales by over 500% over what has always been a strong seller.

3 What embellishment methods are in for tank tops?

Since men prefer ringspun cotton tank tops, Seymour says embellishments tend to be a little lighter, such as a discharge print or a soft-hand plastisol transfer. "If it's a shirt you're going to wear at a workout or for the comfort level, it doesn't have that big, heavy print on it," he says. "A water-based print or discharge print is what you're seeing."

The same will hold true for women if the tank is being used as a fitness or sports garment. "But on the more retail or resort side," Seymour says, "you're still seeing a lot of bling and a lot of multimedia designs." Young girls really like the bling decoration, particularly in organizations like cheer groups. "We're seeing cheer groups using a lot of rhinestones on them," Marino says, "as well as glitter flake and glitter flock to make it a better-than-basic type of garment and really add a lot of value to it."



Neons and tank tops are hot for youth summer apparel promotions right now. This unisex neon yellow tank (NTRTADYLS) is made from 100% pre-shrunk ringspun cotton. Available from Neon Tees (asi/73583; circle 111 on Free Info Card).



This women's neon green crop tank (NTCTWMGRA) is both made from 100% pre-shrunk ringspun cotton. Available from Neon Tees (asi/73583; circle 111 on Free Info Card).

4 Is the tank top primarily a youth-oriented item?

Marino says most of his tank-top clientele are the younger variety, especially because his company specializes in neon apparel, which also happens to be attractive to the youth and young adult crowd. "We make our tanks all the way down to a youth size, so we attract that youth market, that gymnastic or cheer team," he says.

Fraternities and sororities also eat up tank tops – and the louder they are, the better. "They just love it for spring break, for rush, and for all of their different

events," Marino says. "They take something that's really loud and add even louder colors on it. They want to stand out in a crowd." The rave market too has been a big buyer of tanks. "That customer," Marino adds, "is looking for something that's not overly hot because of the heat generated in the clubs themselves, so they like a tank top."

High school and college students are a can't-fail option when it comes to tank tops, says Adam Wright, owner of Pulse Marketing and Apparel. "We did one for a fraternity in Phoenix that said, 'Suns Out, Guns Out,' as in, 'If the sun is shining, my arms will be exposed,'" he says. "I don't think I've seen an adult male, post-25-ish, wear a tank in a place that wasn't a beach or a lake. Thinking strictly promotional, it's still a popular giveaway item for outdoor events that feature younger people."

5 And what about older generations?

As part of the renewed fitness lifestyle trend, Seymour says CrossFit has made significant investments in tank top apparel. "They kind of adopted some of our shirts," he says, "and there are hundreds of orders out there from all over the country where they're using tank tops to promote with their slogans all the inspirational stuff that they do on the fitness side."

It varies for other markets. Tank tops might be out as typical workplace attire, but they are fair game for corporate events and other company get-togethers. In addition, "it can be used as an advertisement piece," he says. "The liquor business is the kind that comes to mind. Especially on the women's side, you're seeing a lot of them being used as promotional items."

And of course, resorts still love filling their gift shops with tank tops, such as a Florida charter fishing company that wanted a creative tank as a keepsake option for guests. "We did a really creative print. The bottom of the shirt was blue, and they used that to look like water, and they did a black outline silhouette of their fishing boat," Seymour says. "On the inside of the shirt, they printed silhouettes of some fish, so it literally looked like the fish were swimming in the water and the boat was on top."

The fishing company originally intended to sell the shirt only as memorabilia for those who went out on their fishing trips. "But it got so popular by word-of-mouth," Seymour says, "that they set up an Internet site and started selling a ton of them."

Shane Dale is a contributing writer for Wearables.

THE CHALLENGE

'How Can I Become A Better Manager?'

Whether they oversee salespeople or production specialists in screen-printing shops, top managers supply the support, tools, and inspiration their people need to succeed.

A leading sales trainer, author and speaker featured everywhere from *The Today Show* to *The Wall Street Journal*, Barry Maher believes a good manager can be a powerful facilitator that jumpstarts even a severely struggling team to lofty achievement levels. Once, Maher took over a sales team that was at the bottom of the sales report. But in his first meeting with the unit, he told them within one year they would be the number one group in the region. "Within less than a year," he says, "they were."

"We created a team mentality. No one who wanted or needed help was ever left alone."

BARRY MAHER

Maher helped make the team's success possible by demonstrating faith in them, making it clear that he truly believed they could be the best. Team members tried to live up to those expectations and soon adopted them as their own. Maher championed his group within the company and helped members work out short- and long-term goals. He supported the salespeople however he could and offered praise and rewards for their accomplishments. "We created a team mentality," he says, noting the unit focused on building strong rapport with customers. "No one who wanted or needed help was ever left alone."

Intent on turning negatives into posi-

tives wherever possible, Maher helped his salespeople to overcome fear of failure. They learned to rigorously review their own performance, always asking what they could have done better. "But after absorbing the lesson, they learned to absolve themselves, leaving the mistakes behind and moving on to the next call," Maher says. Reasoning that a sales pro who enjoys her work will sell more, Maher focused on creating a fun atmosphere where people looked forward to coming to work. "A salesperson who can make the call fun for the prospect is half way to a sale," he adds.

Similarly, at 14 West (*asi/197092*), Kevin Scharnek has spurred success from his sales and client services teams by creating a fun, open, and team-oriented environment. The Wisconsin-based distributorship frequently takes part in camaraderie-building activities, such as employee-only dinners, trips to downtown Milwaukee and Brewers games. "We actually have a fun committee," says Scharnek, the company's founder.

When it comes to helping salespeople prosper, Scharnek has found it effective to aid associates in setting measurable goals and developing plans for meeting them. Furthermore, he says that by accompanying salespeople on calls, he shows that he is invested in their success, while also reinforcing the distributorship's commitment to the clients. "We encourage our salespeople to be in front of clients as often as possible," Scharnek says.

To help maintain a smooth relationship between his sales and client service teams, Scharnek has everyone – including himself – fill out DISC personality profiles, a leading behavior assessment tool. Everyone has access to each other's profiles, which helps employees understand the most effective ways to work with different individuals.

To start off right with building a cohesive team dynamic, Scharnek places particular emphasis on hiring people who fit the 14 West culture – something he says is critical

to being a good manager. "We have a fairly extensive process that's worked out unbelievably well," says Scharnek.

Like Scharnek, Andy Shuman, general manager at Rockland Embroidery (*asi/734150*), says getting good people to join the screen printing and embroidery crews at the Tipton, PA-based decorating shop is a critical managerial function. This contributes directly to another tenet of Shuman's successful managing style: Giving employees the autonomy to make efficiency-enhancing decisions amid the hustle and bustle of fast-paced decorating runs. "I don't want to micro-manage," says Shuman. "If you get the right people and you train them well, they're going to get the job done." Additionally, a tiered bonus structure that rewards collective achievement helps Shuman get the most out of his printing and stitching teams. "It encourages teamwork, double-checking and accountability," he says.

- Christopher Ruvo

Be A Better Manager

Mark Venezia is senior VP of sales, North America, for Spreadshirt, a fast-growing e-commerce platform for personalizing apparel. Here are his five best tips for improving a sales team's performance:

- 1 Astutely identify top targets for potential partners/prospects.
- 2 Keep the focus on relationship-building.
- 3 Leverage strong relationships for referrals and ongoing effective account management.
- 4 Share best practices and what has worked with internal and external teams.
- 5 Don't ask any team member to complete a task that you would not do yourself.



Get the Appointment

It's a common obstacle for sales reps, but one they must overcome: getting to the buyer and nailing down a meeting. It's not easy, but it can certainly be done.

"The most important thing about cold calling is that it doesn't work the way it used to," says Dave Kurlan, author of *Baseline Selling*, and founder and CEO of Kurlan Associates, a sales force development firm. "People don't answer their phones and don't return calls anymore." It's no secret that social networking is a huge part of selling today and he recommends that reps leverage their LinkedIn networks to find potential business and connect with others in their industry.

Kurlan says one of the best ways to develop hot prospects is to pursue leads generated by inbound marketing efforts. "Getting people to find you is the most powerful generator of leads," he says. "An inbound lead means someone has raised their hand, either by requesting information, or an article, or a sample." This allows the sales rep to start a conversation, by finding out what piqued the interest of a potential target.

Targeting businesses new to the area can also be a valuable lead generator. Veteran sales rep Teresa Moisant, owner of Moisant Promotional Products (*asi/275276*), recommends keeping a notepad or using technology to keep track

of potential accounts. "Open your eyes to the companies you pass on the road," she says. "Make a note, and then do the research. Google makes it so easy to research a company and pull up a contact name."

Moisant also takes advantage of networking and social events to seek out new prospects. "I don't go anywhere without a purse full of promotional products. People may not have a need today, but over time, things and needs change." Not every return is immediate, she notes. "It's like planting a garden. The more seeds you sow, your chances for blooms are greater."

- Jean Erickson

Get Personal

After each sales meeting, Teresa Moisant, owner of Moisant Promotional Products (*asi/275276*), makes note of what she considers to be important information from the meeting, such as what was discussed and what she promised the client she'd do. She also notes personal facts about the clients. She recalls a sales rep from years ago who came into her office and asked about her two grandsons, Hudson and Fletcher. "These two little guys are Nana's pride and joy," says Moisant, who was impressed that the rep remembered this. "I try very hard to leave the same kind of impression." In fact, they call her the "Hallmark Lady." She sends cards out at each season to her clients, including Valentine's Day, Easter and Halloween, as well as thank-you notes to current and potential clients. "They are always well-received," she says. -JE

NEWS TICKER

Aprons Etc. (*asi/36558*) announced that it has hired Nancy Long as major accounts manager.

Boxercraft (*asi/41325*) announced that Shakira Fuchu-Parks has been hired as marketing manager.

Bullet (*asi/42424*) has launched 17 new items in several product categories, including technology, bags and writing instruments. For more information, visit www.bulletline.com.

Charles River Apparel (*asi/44620*) has received the National Sporting Goods Association's 2013 All-Star Community Collaboration Award and was also named an honoree at Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center's annual fundraiser, The One Hundred, which honors 100 individuals and groups that have helped in the fight against cancer.

Leed's (*asi/66887*) has announced the addition of Thule to its line of branded products. Thule is known for active and outdoor lifestyle pieces bags. Leed's is offering free embroidery for up to 7,500 stitches on Thule products.

Tri-Mountain (*asi/92125*) announced that it has hired John Perez as marketing associate.

Vantage Apparel (*asi/93390*) hosted an open house event at its Santa Ana, CA, location on June 11. The supplier invited regional distributors to tour the facility and learn about the embroidery machines, contract decoration options, and on-site showroom, as well as meet with sales and management staff.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Is Your Leadership Hurting the Bottom Line?

A quartet of bad leader behaviors that affect productivity.



Oracle, the business hardware and software giant, recently reported a quarterly revenue shortfall based on a decline in new software licenses and cloud subscriptions. So what do the earnings of publicly-traded companies have to do with your sales? More than you know.

When Oracle released its earnings report, company co-president Safra Catz told analysts that “what we really saw was a lack of urgency that we sometimes see in the sales force ...”

Translation: The employees are at fault. But when looking at the corporations reporting lower-than-expected earnings, you need to read between the lines. They are not going to admit that the

failure is a direct result of poor leadership, but 99 times out of 100 that’s what it is.

If your company is having trouble meeting your sales goal, your natural instinct is to blame the employees. But in reality, poor leadership skills can hinder the potential to maximize sales. Bad leader behaviors can be a powerful demotivator to your salespeople. After all, if you are not holding yourself up to the highest standard and pushing your hardest, why should your salespeople? I’ve seen an epidemic of bad leader behaviors in my career, but when I point them out, most leaders downplay, or refuse to acknowledge, the impact their behaviors are hav-

ing on their bottom line. But, in companies where leaders change these behaviors, employees become engaged and motivated. It is really that simple to increase productivity, innovation, and the bottom line.

If you’re an owner or manager examining your own lower-than-expected performance, instead of wasting time searching for scapegoats, look in the mirror. Most bosses unwittingly exhibit bad leader behaviors daily that cause their businesses to suffer.

Here are four increasingly prevalent and damaging behaviors:

The unethical boss: When a boss breaks or fudges the rules, cheats, lies or indulges in behaviors that reveal a lack of moral principles, he or she loses employees’ respect. Without their respect, a boss cannot lead. In addition, when a leader indulges in unethical practices, he gives his employees permission to do the same. Padding mileage reports, splurging on business travel expenses, failing to take responsibility for mistakes – they all become endorsed activities by the boss, the role model.

The unfair boss: Our current societal efforts to treat people equally, have led to confusion among some leaders about “equality” versus “fairness” in the workplace. I talked to a manager who gave all of his employees the same pay raise because he “wanted to be fair.” He then

seemed mystified that the productivity of his best employees declined to that of an average worker. Rewards can be powerful tools of motivation, but they must be administered fairly.

The buddy boss: Can you be buddies with your employees? I don’t believe so. Friendships neutralize the boss’s authority and power. They can also cloud a leader’s objectivity and hinder his or her ability to correct behaviors, to delegate, and to hold employees accountable. When friendships compromise output, it’s the boss who will be accountable. Be friendly to employees but do not cross the line that muddies the relationship between boss and friend.

The disorganized boss: This is the place where Oracle faltered. Catz blamed his company’s earnings declines on hiring too many salespeople and not training them properly, and having them too focused on annual goals instead of quarterly goals. Well whose fault is that – the employees or the managers? Workplaces are filled with employees who lack direction because disorganized leaders don’t deliver and manage plans and strategies to guide their teams.

As a manager, you wield a tremendous amount of power. You can be an incredibly negative power or a positive one who’s looked up to by both peers and employees. For the latter, bosses have to purge the bad behaviors.



Kathleen Brush is a 25-year veteran of international business and author of *The Power of One: You’re the Boss*. Visit her website at www.kathleenbrush.com or e-mail her at kathleenbrush@gmail.com.

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By Tonia Cook Kimbrough

Courses this month:
Fabric Tutorial – 211
Need-To-Know Terms – 231
Color Clinic – 152

An intermediate overview of new burnout fabrications and styles.

Fabric Tutorial – 211 *Sophomore*

What's New With Burnout?

If you're burned out on trendy burnout T-shirts, take a fresh look. The distinctive gossamer quality of this almost see-through fabric has been turned up a notch. What used to be available mostly in lightweight cotton/poly blends has evolved. Today's newest burnout offerings vary in fabrication, color and weights.

For example, the addition of rayon to create a tri-blend has given some styles a desirable fluidity. US Blanks (*asi/92423*) carries such a style in a butterfly sleeve blouse made of 50% polyester, 37.5% cotton and 12.5% rayon. "This style embodies a relaxed, Californian-inspired fit that is not only comfortable, but flattering for any female," says account manager Stephanie Sherwood.

"Texturally, burnout makes an incredible background palette for a graphic design."

Mary Ellen Nichols, Bodek and Rhodes (*asi/40788*)

Mary Ellen Nichols, director of marketing at Bodek and Rhodes (*asi/40788*) explains how today's generation of burnout fabrics, such as Ombré burnout styles from Next Level Apparel, reflect a younger audience's desire to stand out with vibrant color and a unique finish. "First, the fabric is actually burned out randomly so each piece is a work of art. Technically, some of the fibers are dissolved through a chemical process, creating a semi-transparent pattern against more solidly woven fabric. But texturally, this makes an incredible background palette for a graphic design. Or as a young person would say:

'It's so random.' " The gradated light to dark look of ombré embodies recent color trends. "It has that 'dipped effect,' so the wearer can have a splash of color to accent her artwork or mood," Nichols says.

Recently, SanMar (*asi/84863*) added a dozen new fabrics to its District line, including a riff on burnout called "Microburn." It's a modern take on burnout with a weathered look and feel. Microburn shirts feature a rare blend of shades and layers for an unusually lightweight feel and one-of-a-kind look. "The fashion basics market continues to evolve," said Rhea Aslin, senior brand manager at SanMar. "Dying techniques and unique heathers add freshness to fabrics, while neckline and hem variations are changing the T-shirt landscape."



Notable new additions to the District line from SanMar (*asi/84863*; circle 112 on Free Info Card) include a Microburn fabric, which is a soft, weathered evolution of traditional burnout fabric. You can find it in multiple styles, including this poly/cotton raglan baseball tee (DT162).

photo courtesy of SanMar (*asi/84863*)



This burnout butterfly sleeve blouse (US220) is made from a tri-blend fabric and available from US Blanks (*asi/92423*; circle 113 on Free Info Card).

photo courtesy of US Blanks (*asi/92423*)



Two Next Level Apparel (*asi/73867*) ombré burnout styles, including this racerback tank (6532) and this deep V T-shirt (6542), are available from Bodek and Rhodes (*asi/40788*; circle 114 on Free Info Card).

photo courtesy of Bodek and Rhodes (*asi/40788*)

An intermediate lexicon of denim varieties.

Need-To-Know Terms – 231

Sophomore

Dish on Denim

Denim is a classic that will always be in style. However, types of denim ebb and flow in popularity. The extremely faded acid wash look of the 1980s, for example, disappeared for a period of time and re-emerged with a recent flashback to the '80s styles. Here are five helpful terms to keep you on point when discussing today's denim.

- 1. Raw denim** – In contrast to pre-washed denim, raw denim skips the washing process after being dyed, leaving dye clinging to the fabric fibers until the garment's first wash.
- 2. Selvedge denim** – Refers to how the edge of the denim fabric is constructed. Selvedge denim has a clean edge finish that will not fray. Retail jean manufacturers will sew a color contrast seam on the inside of the leg to indicate it's selvedge.
- 3. Stretch denim** – Has the addition of an elastane fiber such as Lycra or Spandex in the fabric blend so that the denim better conforms to the body and moves with the wearer.
- 4. Whiskered denim** – Has faded creases that stretch horizontally at the upper thigh/crotch area of a pair of jeans.
- 5. Denim honeycombs** – The denim fade takes on the appearance of a real honeycomb pattern behind the knees of the pair of jeans.



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An entry-level review of 1920s colorways inspired by *The Great Gatsby*

Color Clinic – 152

Freshman

Color Me Gatsby

With Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* creating a stir this summer, there's little wonder that styles from the 1920s are all the rage. From Gatsby's signature ivory linen jacket to Daisy's stunning gowns in lavender lace and bedazzled blush pink, there is inspiration for promotional apparel programs looking to make a splash.

In general, fashion colors from the 1920s ranged from bright and dramatic hues such as acid yellow, crisp chartreuse, royal blue and emerald green to softer, subdued shades in pure, pale colors that almost whisper with shine and sparkle. Glamorous Art Deco

styles paired colors in high contrast, repeating geometric designs and adding a touch of metallic. For this reason, black, gray and white combinations were popular at the time as well. Simple drop-waist dresses with drama through color, pattern and shine were a hallmark of the decade.

You can create similar high-impact promotional apparel by taking the lead from the 1920s. Experts at Executive Apparel ([asi/53418](#)) blogged that richly tailored suits, ties and collared shirts for men in white, tan or gray tones can bring a dash of Gatsby to the office for men's uniforms. Or, in contrast, a royal blue blazer with gold buttons

goes to the heart of Deco flair. Ladies can mix white basics such as a tailored skirt with pastel-colored blouses or punch up their outfits with graphic accessories.

Scarves and ties are an excellent way to custom design a 1920s pattern with a logo tastefully incorporated into the artwork. Consider hats too. The cloche has made a comeback, according to Sunday Afternoons Inc. ([asi/90134](#)). Its new Bella style hat features a classic cloche asymmetrical style brim and comes in a pale ocean green that perfectly represents a soft 1920s shade that could have been worn by Daisy herself.



Tailored suits in rich colors, like this single-breasted poly blazer (1000) in royal blue from Executive Apparel ([asi/53418](#); circle 115 on Free Info Card), evokes the vivid color palette of *The Great Gatsby*.
photo courtesy of Executive Apparel ([asi/53418](#))



Extremely popular in the 1920s with women, cloche hats are back in vogue. This style (Bella) from Sunday Afternoons Inc. ([asi/90134](#); circle 109 on Free Info Card) is packable and features an asymmetrical brim.
photo courtesy of Sunday Afternoons Inc. ([asi/90134](#))



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Hot Product Showcase

This Month: Kids' Wear

By Samantha Phillips

From the grocery store to the ball game and even at the setting of your supposed-to-be-romantic date night out, kids are everywhere – loud, adorable, and impossible to miss. Because of that, those ever-present Mini-mes are a prime market for gaining brand recognition. Since the public places they frequent are the stomping grounds of the everyday consumer, branded kids wear is an essential element for those clients trying to make an indelible brand impression. Here are some of the most durable and eye-catching styles in the wearables industry which, much like the youngsters who don them, are impossible to ignore.



Camo Cool

Blending in will feel like standing out with this 100% cotton camouflage tee (35738). Pair it with Dickies easy-pull-up khaki shorts (KR224) for the perfect outdoor get-up. The back elastic waistband makes for a no-sweat morning dressing routine and the stain release fabric allows for worry-free outdoor playtime. Camo tee available from S&S Activewear (asi/84358; circle 118 on Free Info Card); shorts available from MLF Sales (asi/68264; circle 120 on Free Info Card).



Friday Night Delights

Every kid will feel like an MVP in this contrast color football tee (3381). The striped sleeves and heather-colored blank front create an ideal canvas for a screen-printed logo of his parent's favorite team. A matching lightweight bucket hat (7801Y) is an attractive pairing for this football-fanatic style. Shirt and hat available from S&S Activewear (asi/84358; circle 118 on Free Info Card); Dickies pull-on navy shorts (KR224) available from MLF Sales (asi/68264; circle 120 on Free Info Card).



Raglan Rage

Featuring a comfortable stretch design, this $\frac{3}{4}$ sleeve raglan tee (4253) is perfect for the changing seasons. Pair it with shorts for a must-have spring outfit, or sell it with these Enza denim overalls (EZ815) with adjustable straps for care-free playing in the autumn leaves. Raglan available from American Apparel (asi/35297; circle 121 on Free Info Card); overalls available from One Stop Inc. (asi/75085; circle 122 on Free Info Card).

Tanks for Tots

With its eye-catching colors and durable imprinting capabilities, this tri-blend toddler tank (TR108) makes for the perfect beach top. Add more color and fun to this summer get-up with a sporty baseball cap (6909) and matching navy cotton shorts. Tank available from American Apparel (asi/35297; circle 121 on Free Info Card); hat available from S&S Activewear (asi/84358; circle 118 on Free Info Card); and matching navy cotton shorts (8306) from Broder Bros. Co. (asi/42090; circle 107 on Free Info Card).



.....• The snazziest wearables around



Ruffling Feathers

Day trips just got a little more adorable with this ruffled romper dress (4783) made of 100% combed ringspun cotton. A convenient three-snap enclosure built into the bottom makes it easy to put on and take off. Available from L.A. T Sportswear (asi/65948; circle 124 on Free Info Card).



In Stitches

Exposed color stitching along the seams of this infant sweat pant and hoodie set (419) creates a unique and recognizable design. The decorated set demands attention with an embroidered appliqué and a sublimated pant leg. Both the hoodie and sweat pants are crafted from 100% cotton interlock making this outfit lightweight, durable and perfect for everyday activities. Available from Infant Blanks (asi/48675; circle 125 on Free Info Card).

Creeper Crawlers

This infant tee (9500) with creeper, snap-bottom design is easy on delicate baby skin and makes for safe crawling adventures. And for those just-out-of-the-bath newborns, this pastel fleece robe (965) with tie belt and built-in rabbit ears is so cute, parents just might wait a little longer post bath time to swap it out for a proper outfit. Tee available from Delta Apparel (asi/49172; circle 126 on Free Info Card); robe available from Infant Blanks (asi/48675; circle 125 on Free Info Card).



Pink Power

Keep an infant smiling in this comfortable stretch camouflage creeper, available in three impossible-to-miss hues. Top off the look with this infant rib hat (4009) with adjustable top knot, made from fine combed cotton. Camo creeper (CD 820) available from One Stop Inc. (asi/75085; circle 122 on Free Info Card); hat available from American Apparel (asi/35297; circle 121 on Free Info Card).



Samantha Phillips is an intern for Wearables.

A FRIEND IN NEED

Stuck for a sale? No matter the setting, the classic, versatile, wonderful polo is there to lend a hand.

BY C.J. MITTICA, GRACE BENNETT AND CHUCK ZAK

If you need a lifeline to boost your sales, there is good news: The polo is here to help. Because of its spectacular versatility, buyers from a wide variety of industries look to the polo for their wearable needs. “There’s really no industry off limits when it comes to polos,” says Shelley Renning, general merchandise manager for SanMar (*asi/84863*). “They may have originated from an athletic style, but their use has shifted to become acceptable within the corporate and casual environments as well.”

Polos proliferated for decades as the uniform of choice for tennis and polo players, but today it is more than just the look of sport. It’s hard to name a market now that doesn’t use them. Renning lists front offices, industrial settings, trade shows, golf courses, restaurants and hospitality venues as just a few of the markets that love the polo. “They are really a core basic now with a broad range of applications and possibilities,” says Renning. “There’s a market for everything from the most basic polo, which is essentially a T-shirt with a collar, to performance shirts with enhanced features such as wicking or UV protection, to higher-end, luxe options featuring pima or silk.”

To hone in on the right choice, start considering the endless variety of options that clients face. Cotton or polyester? Solid or



stripes? High-end or budget? Narrow down these options by talking with clients and thinking about their potential needs. “Offering an assortment of polos in different fabrics can help sell to specific markets,” says Yvette Corona, wholesale marketing representative for American Apparel (*asi/35297*). “Heavier-knit fabrics, such as piqué, are extra durable and are sought after for sports and team wear. On the flip side, lighter-weight fabrics such as jersey or tri-blend are perfect for corporate wear, uniforms and everyday use.”

What to look for? “My clients that work outside look for brighter colors for safety reasons,” says Peggy Peugh, an account executive at HALO Branded Solutions (*asi/356000*). “A bright, snag-proof polo with a chest pocket for convenience is perfect for outdoor or get-up-and-go laborers. Performance is also considered, so moisture-wicking polos and UV-protective material work well for these kinds of jobs.”

Polo Dos and Don'ts

DO know your plackets. Men’s polo plackets tend to feature a maximum of three buttons, and it’s rare to have them all buttoned up. Women’s plackets can go as high as five or six and can run halfway down the shirt. Buttoning them all creates a distinctive feminine look.

DON'T pop that collar. Because it’s not the ’80s anymore, and you want to be known as a person with a modicum of class.

DO layer smartly. Underneath a windbreaker? Golf course-ready. Underneath a V-neck sweater? Office go-to. Underneath a tailored suit? Perfect summer wedding attire.

DON'T untuck blindly. Opinions vary on this, but here’s a good rule of thumb: Untuck in business settings only when the polo falls just at the waist. (Anything too long will look sloppy.) Otherwise, class it up a little by tucking.

DO pair it with everything. Jeans, chinos, khakis, shorts, cargos, dress pants – the polo works with all of these. No matter the look, it can’t go wrong.

DON'T forget about cotton. Technical poly polos are the hottest thing going right now, but 100% cotton is a classic that will never go out of style. Just as good, look for an ultra-relaxed tri-blend that offers the best of both worlds.

FEARSOME FOURSOME

Polos are as classic as they come, but how to decide between all of those choices?

CLASSIC



Classic polos are perfect for any casual occasion or for completing a professional, yet relaxed, corporate image. Keep it simple with a left-chest embroidered logo and choose a color that accentuates the company's branding.

This two-button cotton piqué polo (F003500) is designed to minimize shrinkage and color fade. Available from F.A. MacCluer (asi/68364; circle 117 on Free Info Card).

STRIPED



A striped polo adds a dash of sporty style to any outfit, especially when paired with solid-colored shorts or slacks. Choose thinner stripes like those in this model to maintain a more traditional look, but one with just enough flair to stand out.

This IZOD 100% polyester polo (13Z0112) features horizontal feeder stripes and extended split tail. Available from S&S Activewear (asi/84358; circle 118 on Free Info Card).

HORSE COLLARED

How did the polo become the defining middle ground between casual and dressy? It involves an alligator, a sportsman on a horse and two visionary men.

1896

The "original polo shirt" wasn't actually a polo at all. Rather, it was a white button-down shirt, created by John E. Brooks of Brooks Brothers. Taking in a polo match in England, Brooks noticed the players had collars that buttoned down so they wouldn't flap in the wind.

1920

The creation of the now-famous polo player emblem occurs in Buenos Aires. Lewis Lacy, an Argentine-Irish polo player and haberdasher, opens a men's shop and begins selling a buttoned-down shirt with the embroidered emblem of a polo player.

1926

The polo shirt as we know it today finds mainstream recognition at the U.S. Open Championship. Top tennis player René Lacoste decides the starched, long-sleeve



1953

The polo rises as a symbol of a high status, which is only enforced when U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower wears one of Lacoste's polos during a game of golf.



Ralph Lifshitz (aka Ralph Lauren) creates a casual-wear company named Polo, which produces its own line of the popular shirt featuring the emblem of the embroidered polo player. The Ralph Lauren polo becomes the standard of American fashion tastes.

1972

You can't go wrong by choosing one of these four defining styles.

PERFORMANCE



This men's slim-fit performance polo (CL-3) features stretch fabric, moisture management, an anti-snag finish and UV resistance. Available from Stormtech (asi/89864; circle 119 on Free Info Card).

Active users require the all-day comfort and advanced features of a performance polo to keep their cool while competing. Look for a model that offers ease of mobility and comes infused with in-demand qualities to wick away sweat and protect against sun damage.

Consider a polo that can address environmental concerns without sacrificing style, comfort or performance. Make this the centerpiece of an eco-awareness campaign or let its forward-thinking construction and design speak for itself.

ECO



This men's antibacterial textured polo has a nylon/poly body and panels made with 92% recycled polyester (FA5145). Available from Fersten Worldwide Inc. (asi/53974; circle 92 on Free Info Card).

traditional tennis whites weren't breathable enough for the sport's demanding agility requirements. He designs and wears a loosely-knit tee from piqué cotton that features a buttoned placket, a longer shirttail, and shorter sleeves for easier mobility. Interest takes off immediately.

1933

Lacoste and his friend, Andre Gillier, open up Chemise Lacoste, a company through which the public could buy the same shirt Lacoste unveiled seven years ago. The now-famous Alligator logo has several origin stories, from being used as a nickname for Lacoste to describing the elongated back shirttail of the polo he designed.

The term 'polo' becomes common vernacular in relation to the shirt – not only in the sport Polo, but in any type of setting where the shirt is worn.

1940

Lacoste adds a line of colored shirts to the traditional tennis whites and expands production of the shirt into America.

1951

1990

Companies begin branding their own logos onto polo shirts for casual and business wear.



2000

Advancements in fabric technology create unending demand for the polyester performance polo.

What factors are worth considering?

- **Performance properties.** Snag-proof shirts and stain-resistant finishes are also sought-after performance features for a number of uniform solutions. "Selling to a more industrial setting? A polo designed to withstand rigorous washing with snag-proof material might be ideal," says Renning. "Targeting the service and hospitality industry? Stain-resistant piqués are a key performance attribute that keeps a polo looking great spill after spill."

- **Gender.** Male vs. female is also an important consideration, particularly because the days of male-only polos are long gone. "Women tend to think of polos as a 'have to wear' instead of a 'want to wear,'" says Renning. "Look for polos that feature feminine styling and detailing such as longer pockets or novelty trims. Thoughtful designs and having a style that fits well is crucial in this particular market." For those times when both males and females must be outfitted, like with a sales force or trade show team, companion styles for men and women are in order. The polos can be an exact match or be in complementary colors that reflect the overall brand image.

- **Price.** Polos have a tremendous range in costs, ranging from bargain basement options to high-end brand offerings. Mary Ellen Nichols, director of marketing communications for Bodek and Rhodes (*asi/40788*), finds that Corporate America wants to keep a \$25 budget per decorated item when it comes to basic polo purchases. "Smart counselors have to sell value, not just price," she says. "Savvy counselors have to carefully diagnose exactly what functions their advertisers really want out of their garments to sell that extra value, and to increase their sales to higher-ticket and designer-brand garments."

- **Trends.** Polos tend to have a very traditional perception, but there are suppliers pushing the envelope with collared shirts that fit the polo category. "We're doing really interesting things with collared shirts," says Golden Goods (*asi/57695*) Co-Founder Jeff Scult. "It's kind of our interpretation of a polo, which is sometimes seen on the more

"The clients like to touch it, feel it, make sure it's durable and is everything that they're looking for in a polo."

PEGGY PEUGH, HALO BRANDED SOLUTIONS (*ASI/356000*)

conservative side." Golden Goods is giving short- and long-sleeve collared shirts a more contemporary retail fashion feel. "Think of a shirt that feels like a super-soft T-shirt and still has a collar on it," he says. The new collared shirts have a unisex quality, as well as side vents and a nice fit. The supplier is using blends that have a heathered look and then over-dyeing them with other washed colors. "It gives it an interesting textural appearance that we typically don't see," he says.

Even after doing all the legwork to identify

the best polo, there is still one top way to satisfy the client: Let them take it home. "The clients like to touch it, feel it, make sure it's durable and is everything that they're looking for in a polo," Peugh says. "Allowing your clients that opportunity gives them one-on-one experience with the product and, hopefully, will persuade them to buy it in the end."

C.J. Mittica is the editor, Grace Bennett is an intern and Chuck Zak is a staff writer for Wearables.

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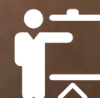
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UNIFORMS EDITION

BY C.J. MITTICA, SARA LAVENDUSKI,
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Landscaper

Clothing serves an essential function – to protect us from the elements. And nowhere is that put to the test more than with the workers who have dirty jobs. *Wearables* returns with another installment of our Dirty Jobs series, inspired by the seminal Discovery Channel show of the same name. Here's a look at the hard-working folk who get down and dirty, and the clothing they wear to help keep the grime at bay.

STABLE MANAGER

Hay, dirt and manure are all along for the ride.

BY SARA LAVENDUSKI

For most people, the childhood dream of owning a horse remains just that – a fantasy for imaginative kids. The ones who make their dreams come true quickly discover that the road to horse training is paved with something you'd rather not step in.

Dirt is an instant companion when Caroline Kehoe starts her day at 8:00 a.m. at Quiet Victory Farm, a show stable in Titusville, NJ. The assistant manager and trainer – wearing durable, waterproof work boots – walks back and forth between the barn and fields to bring each horse inside to be fed. There, she removes protective bell boots and fly masks, often caked with mud, and then makes up 15 buckets of grain. Once the horses are fed, Kehoe and Vicki Peters, the head trainer with decades of experience on the national hunter/jumper show circuit, clean the barn. “We pick all the stalls and add fresh shavings,” explains Kehoe, a young but experienced horse jumper. “Then we empty the wheelbarrows into a manure pit.” Each stall also contains a feed trough and two five-gallon water buckets that are emptied and scrubbed. “We bleach the water buckets weekly,” she adds. “They're really heavy when they have water in them, so I always get wet.” Finally, a leaf blower rids the aisle of stray pieces of hay and shavings.

After the barn is clean, the day's training rides begin. “We get so dusty and sweaty,” explains Kehoe, “especially in the summer.” Each mount must first be groomed and the hooves picked clean of mud and small rocks. After the ride, they're groomed again; sometimes they're filthy enough to merit a bath.

“It's like washing a van,” says Peters. In the evening while Peters teaches, Kehoe changes back into her work boots to make 15 dinners and turn the horses back outside for the night.

As animal care professionals, Peters and Kehoe know the true meaning of dirty. “There's the manure and urine, of course, and the hay and shavings,” says Kehoe. “In the winter and spring, the mud is bad. In the summer and fall, it's the dust. We're filthy by the end of the day.” To manage the dust when riding, they frequently water and drag the two rings with a harrow. “Whenever I drag the one outside, a huge cloud rises above the houses next door,” Peters laughs. “So I try to do it early in the day.”

During their busy days, Kehoe and Peters need clothes that take them seamlessly from cleaning to riding and back. “It all has to be durable and easy care,” says Peters. “The dirt gets embedded in everything, so we have to wash each outfit after one use.” In addition to breeches and boots, they wear a basic fitted top and layers, depending on the season. When coaching at shows, they wear matching embroidered items, including polos from Lands' End Business Outfitters (asi/250566) as well as fleece vests (LP79) and softshell jackets (J790 and L790) from SanMar (asi/84863). “The softshell is great because it's wind and water-resistant, and it's fitted and short so it doesn't catch on the back of the saddle,” says Peters. “It's versatile, and easily repels dirt and debris.”

Yes, barns are dirty, but it's all a matter of maintenance, as Peters and Kehoe have demonstrated. And the right apparel choices play a primary role in that objective. Despite the grime, these stable managers have stepped into the horse world with both feet – and love every minute of it.

Sara Lavenduski is an editorial intern for Wearables.

UNIFORM CHECKLIST

Riding breeches and work boots are essential to horse training, and imprinted polos, vests and softshell jackets provide versatile options year-round.

POTENTIAL PITCH

Moisture-wicking tees and polos are perfect for hot summer days. Fitted winter jackets are ideal for working during the coldest months.



1. Caroline Kehoe cleans one of the 15 stalls at Quiet Victory Farm, a show stable in Titusville, NJ.

2. Peters drags the outdoor riding ring to even the footing, causing dust to kick up.

3. Peters rinses the residue from a feed trough while wearing a water-resistant softshell jacket from SanMar (asi/84863).

4. Peters shows no fear of filth as she empties a wheelbarrow into the manure pit.

5. Kehoe jumps Captain during one of her daily rides. For versatility, she layers with a fleece vest from SanMar (asi/84863).

WINEMAKER

A clean finish comes with a lot of scrubbing and more.

BY CHRISTOPHER RUVO

Sand Castle Winery is about as close to true “old world” charm as you can get without going to Europe. Firstly, there’s an actual castle at the Erwinna, PA vineyard, built to replicate Bratislava Castle in Slovakia. Inside, a tapestry overlooks an elegant tasting room where visitors sample everything from Riesling to Cabernet Sauvignon, listening to a wine guide explain the character of different vintages. Outside, 72 acres of flowering vine rows roll alongside lush woods. From its hillside perch, the property looks down at the winding Delaware River.

But this perfect tableau wouldn’t be possible if it wasn’t for the difficult – and dirty – work of winery co-founder Joseph Maxian and his team of dedicated employees. That was evident during an afternoon visit one gray afternoon this spring. As the vineyard visitors sipped and chatted, far below them in the wine cellar twin brothers, Stefan and Mark Lazowski, were cleaning wine vats and decanting le vin by hand. Wearing yellow rain suits (waterproof overalls and jackets), the Sand Castle employees siphoned Cabernet Sauvignon through a tube – no mechanical pumping here – from 55-gallon drums into buckets and other drums. They were good at their jobs, but even so, spray and spillage was inevitable. “The gear helps,” said Mark, chuckling. “You don’t want to drive home smelling like wine.”

UNIFORM CHECKLIST

No standard uniform. Wearables change with the seasons and the type of winery work performed: jeans, work boots, hoodies, caps, wellies and more.

POTENTIAL PITCH

Create camaraderie, a more professional image, and turn winery workers into walking advertisements by getting them into vineyard-logoed gear, including: Carhartt-style work jackets; unstructured low-profile caps; durable T-shirts and hooded sweatshirts; and waterproof rain suits. Bonus: Wineries can benefit from selling branded fleeces, polo shirts, caps and wine bags to their customers. Pitch these, too!

The really dirty work, however, comes with cleaning the vats. During this wet and sticky process, a worker decked in rainproof gear slides through a small, porthole-like opening into the vat and shovels out a soupy combination of sediment and left-over liquid. Wearing a head-lamp to see inside the unlit 3,600-gallon vat, he then uses an electric power washer to spray the inside and a brush to scrub things down.

Vat cleaning can leave one soiled even on slip-free days. Alas, those don’t come along too often. “Slipping and sliding when cleaning the vat is common,” said Maxian, who recounted the time he lost his footing in a vat while giving a master winemaker a tour of the cellar. “He said, ‘Too bad. It could have been a good wine,’ ” Maxian recalled.

The dirtiness doesn’t end when the wine is ready for bottling, though. Sand Castle produces upwards of 12,000 cases annually. So while a machine makes sure most of the red, white and specialty vintages reach their respective bottles smoothly, it’s a given that things don’t always go off without a glitch. “If the machine throws a tantrum, wine sprays all over,” said Maxian. The remnants of stains on the ceiling – a kind of faded vino rosso splatter art – made it clear Maxian wasn’t kidding.

Before reaching the cellar and bottling rooms, the dirty work of wine starts among the vines, especially during spring planting. This May, Justin Reeder and A.J. Thompson were up to their knees in such work – literally. Wearing durable denim jeans and hooded sweatshirts, the duo dug holes for new vines, shoveling aside shale and dirt so that hundreds of young plants could be placed at a good depth. (Ball caps and sun hats come in handy during the sunnier stretches.) On dry days, it can be dusty, grit-tasting labor that leaves you looking like you’ve been sliding into second base all afternoon. On wet days, planting is somewhat akin to sloshing around in a mud wrestling ring. “The good thing about it though,” said Reeder, smiling, “is that you can get a good tan.”

While winery work can be dirty, the Sand Castle crew goes above and beyond to run a clean operation. Cleanliness, indeed, is essential to good wine. “It’s among the most important

things we do,” Maxian said. And despite the soiling and countless hours he devotes to running the winery, Maxian wouldn’t trade it for anything: “It’s an amazing process. And in the end, it brings people happiness. Good wine can change the soul.”

Christopher Ruvo is a staff writer for Wearables.

“Slipping and sliding when cleaning the vat is common.”

JOSEPH MAXIAN, SAND CASTLE WINERY



1. Removing sediment and excess liquid is part of the wine-vat cleaning process at Sand Castle Winery in Erwinna, PA.
2. Keeping wine vats clean is essential to producing a good vintage, but the work amid the wine residues can get messy.
3. Owner Joseph Maxian inspects the vines at 72-acre Sand Castle Winery.

BUTCHER

Beef with a side of blood-stained aprons is the order of the day.

BY CHUCK ZAK

"There's always blood," says Carl Venezia Jr., second-generation owner and operator of Carl Venezia Meats in Plymouth Meeting, PA. This may sound like a bit of dialog between a veteran crime boss and his fresh-faced enforcer, but it's really just dirty-job fatalism as expressed in the butchery game.

For 56 years, the Venezia family has been providing retail and wholesale meats in suburban Philadelphia – 14 years at their current location and a whopping 42 years in nearby Whitmarsh Township. It's hard to guess just how much of that blood has besmirched the aprons of Venezia staff over the years, but the most recent of it lies vivid on the table in front of employee Tom Blunt as he carves a large hunk of beef in preparation for the grinder.

"He'll be cutting a lot of meat up today," Venezia explains as Blunt saws away diligently nearby. "Then he'll grind it one time, and then tomorrow morning before it goes out, we grind it a second time." The daily tally of just how much beef gets ground up can reach as high as 500 pounds on most Thursdays as the store gets ready for the weekend rush. Although Venezia also processes its share of poultry, pork, lamb and other meats, it's that mountain of beef that keeps the team busiest. "The beef is the messiest because of the blood," Venezia reaffirms. And to be sure, there's plenty of mopping up of countertops in between bouts of cutting and grinding. It's all part of Venezia's fastidious routine to maintain a clean shop and satisfy their daily

inspections by the USDA. As a wholesaler of ground beef to local restaurants and pizzerias, these inspections are required to ensure that all precautions are being followed and that the product being shipped out is safe.

While surgically removing fat and separating meat from bone, the butchers at Carl Venezia Meats wear maroon polos embroidered with the business' name. "I'll buy them regularly and tell everybody to throw the old ones out and start using the new ones," Venezia says. This regular churn of new workwear has probably resulted in each employee clearing precious closet space just for their polos. "Over the years we keep accumulating shirts," Venezia says, "so I'm sure everybody has a least a dozen."

Six-paneled baseball caps are also an option, as are long white chef coats during winter, but the long white aprons that overlay the imprinted polos are an absolute must. This is important as the blood-smeared aprons and coats are provided and cleaned by uniform company Cintas, while the polos go home with the employees' families and get thrown in with the regular wash. The mere suggestion that a bloody apron might make its way into the family laundry brings an animated denial from Venezia as his face takes on the alarmed expression of someone imagining the familial consequences of such an unthinkable laundry mishap.

It's not just the cutting and grinding that risks the purity of those aprons and chef coats. Tom Blunt shows off the walk-in cooler that holds the cuts in various states of dress, some bloodier than others. "I clean this whole box out every Monday morning," he says. "All of these shelves are covered with blood. I change all the shelves, reorganize, clean everything and mop the floor." But even this weekly ritual must pale in comparison to the earlier days of the family business in its original location. "We had an actual slaughterhouse there and we used to slaughter beef, veal and lamb three days a week," Venezia remembers. "This is a lot cleaner." One gets the sense that this is something of an understatement.

Today, Carl Venezia Meats leaves the

slaughtering to someone else and concerns itself with providing the community with the freshest and best-prepared meats. Keeping a tidy environment is just part of the job, and there's always another job waiting. "When we get done there," says Venezia, pointing to where Blunt is busy cleaning out the grinder to prepare for the next round of rendering, "we'll wipe it down and just move on to the next thing."

Chuck Zak is a staff writer for Wearables.

"There's always blood."

CARL VENEZIA JR., CARL VENEZIA MEATS



1. Tom Blunt replaces meat on the cooler shelves after performing his weekly cleaning ritual.

2. Carl Venezia Jr. prepares slices of liver in the cutting area in the back of his family store, Carl Venezia Meats, in Plymouth Meeting, PA.

UNIFORM CHECKLIST

Employees wear maroon polos with an embroidered logo over the left chest. A six-paneled cap in matching color with embroidered logo is optional. Butchers also wear a long white apron over top of the polo and a white chef's coat in winter. (These are not imprinted.)

POTENTIAL PITCH

A tasteful embroidered logo is an easy addition to the apron and coat. Gloves could come in handy when moving things to and from the freezer.

LANDSCAPER

Only the most durable workwear makes the cut for these lawn jockeys.

BY C.J. MITTICA

By the time much of America is just waking up, the crew with Bill Clark & Son Landscaping is ankle deep in its work. Little time is wasted when the four-man group reaches its first stop at 7:15 on an early June morning. Push mowers and weed whackers are unloaded and deployed. Bill Clark Jr. hops on the trailer's showpiece machine (a Gravely riding mower with a 60-inch deck), backs it out from the trailer and starts nimbly trimming the lawn of the Philadelphia property. With a driveway nearly 700 feet long and enough acreage to hold a separate garage and a full-sized guest house, the job isn't easy, but 35 minutes later the crew is finished and the equipment is packed up. Clark hops into the driver's seat of a Ford F350, grabs a legal pad and puts an X next to the first entry — one of 25 for the day.

It's hard work five (and often six) days a week, but don't assume that landscaping is tedious toil. "I find my job extremely satisfying," says Clark Jr., who runs the business with his dad Clark Sr. "I love being outside. I worked a couple indoor jobs before and couldn't stand it."

But being outside, of course, means exposure to the elements. Sweat, grass and dirt are all part of the job, whether it's mulching flower beds or hauling in stone. This June morning is surprisingly mild, but the hottest days of summer quickly become a sweat-fest, especially with a 30-pound leaf blower strapped across your back. "If you want a dirty job," says

Pat Drobek, a long-time member of the crew, "come out here when it's 100 degrees."

By all accounts, sod jobs are the worst. One recent spring day had the crew carrying 5' x 10' strips of fresh, heavy sod for multiple hours. "We were covered head to toe in mud," Drobek adds.

Many landscaping companies don't wear logoed apparel, but the owner insists on it. "It helps to get the name out there, and people see the work" says Clark Sr., who started the company in 1980. "I get a lot of calls from people who see us at one of our jobs." Each crew member receives 10 gray, cotton Gildan (*asi/56842*) T-shirts with "Bill Clark & Son Landscaping" imprinted on the backs. In addition, the more tenured workers have accumulated other items over the year, like hoodies and crewneck sweatshirts for cooler days. But the older apparel just says "Bill Clark Landscaping." When did it become Bill Clark & Son?

"A few years ago," says Clark Jr., 29, "but it never got put on the sign until this year."

"Same with the new shirts," adds Johnny Jordan, who's been with the company for five-and-a-half years. The shirts will last two or three years before they get replaced.

The rest of the uniform consists of workwear classics. Some will wear shorts, but most of the crew prefers Dickies (*asi/49765*) work pants for protection, even on the hottest of days. "Rocks will fly up and hit you while weed whacking," says Clark Jr. "You can also get poison ivy and sumac on your legs, and I'm allergic to them." Jeans are often too hot for the work; Clark Jr. sweated so much on his first day in jeans that he never wore them to work again.

Hiking boots are standard footwear options for traction and comfort, but the workers will go through them quickly. "I got hiking boots before the season," says Joe Farrell, a newer member of the crew. "I walk on grass all day and these are what they look like." He pulls up the sole of one of his boots, showing off the worn tread.

The crew's work day picks up an instant rhythm: Arrive at a house, cut the lawn and move on to the next one. In between houses, Farrell and Drobek hold animated conversa-

tions in the truck bed; Jordan and Clark Jr. listen to the radio in the cab. Jordan worked for the post office for two years before joining Bill Clark & Son. He doesn't miss it, especially with the notion that mail delivery could be scaled back to three days a week. "Computers can't do this job," Jordan says. And if they did, what apparel could they wear?

C.J. Mittica is the editor of *Wearables*.



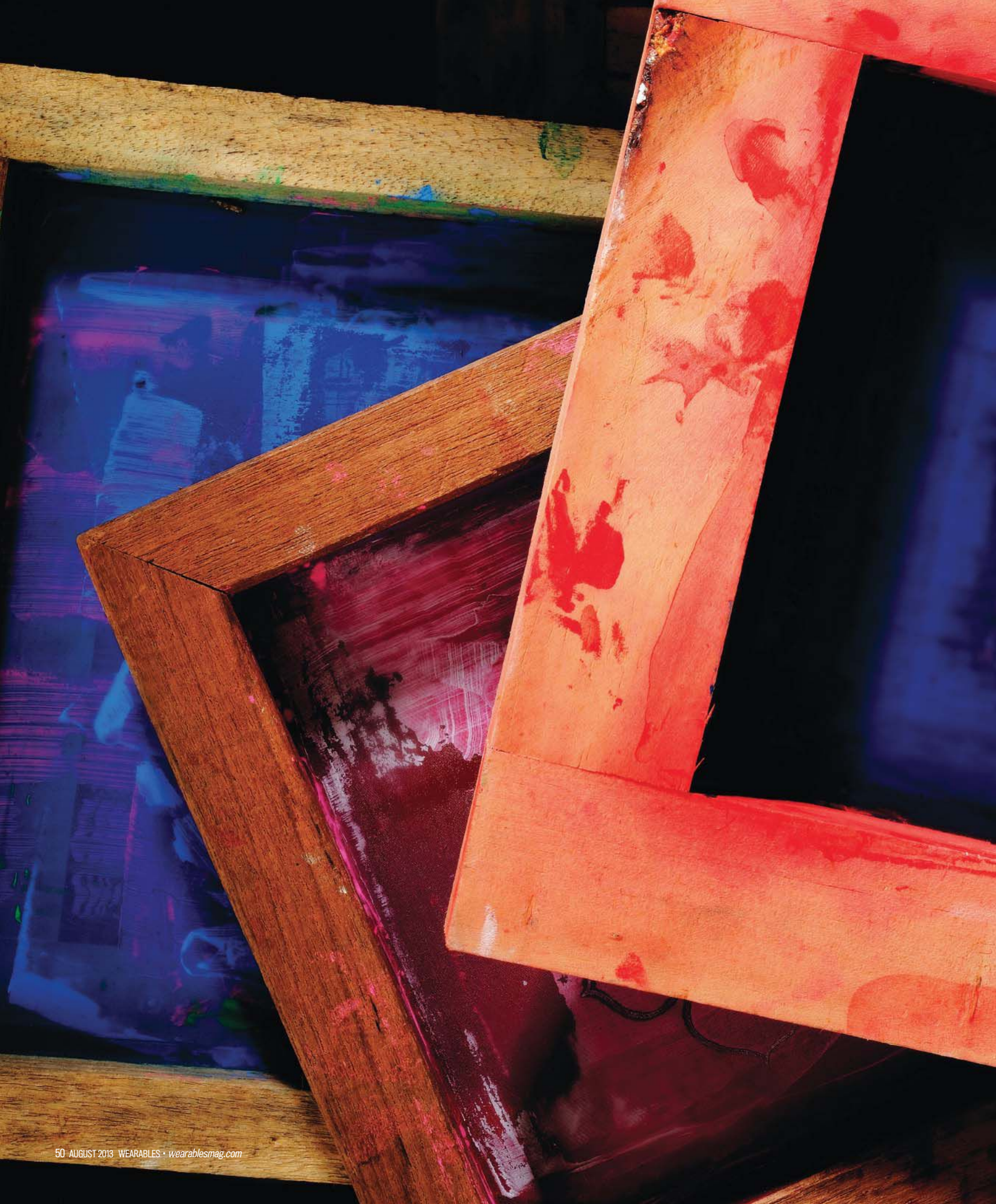
1. Hills prove the toughest challenge for Joe Farrell (left) and Bill Clark Jr. of Bill Clark & Son landscaping.
2. Clark Jr. cuts the front lawn at a Philadelphia home.
3. Johnny Jordan trims with a weed whacker. Leaf blowers and edgers are also standard equipment for a freshly-cut lawn.

UNIFORM CHECKLIST

Imprinted T-shirts with the company's name and number are standard, along with hoodies and crew-neck sweatshirts. Dickies pants and hiking boots are very common, though some will wear cargo shorts on the warmest days.

POTENTIAL PITCH

Some landscapers don't have logoed apparel, which is an instant ticket to a potential sale. A poly moisture-wicking shirt will pay off big during the hottest months, and an imprinted winter beanie can also come in handy on cool fall days or spring mornings.



NEW!

SCREEN-PRINTING SUCCESS

LOGO

or

NO GO?

Customer-supplied logos can be a hassle, so here are the five essential steps to getting them fixed up for screen printing.

BY THOMAS TRIMINGHAM

Nothing may be more important to a company than its logo – and yet, when it comes to screen printing, rarely is it handled with care. Customers will provide their logos in a wide array of formats, sizes, and levels of usability, with little guarantee that what you receive is ready to go on the press.

To get it right, everything is up to you: how to price it, revise it and separate it for the screen-printing process. The order of that process matters too, for it is critical to know how the design needs to be separated before the price can be properly determined. If it turns out a logo needs to be a four-color print instead of two-color, it can seriously affect the price per unit on a lower-volume order. You can either eat the loss or have the awkward moment when you go back to the customer to tell her it will cost more than you originally anticipated.

The best way to handle logos for screen printing is to first review the design for reproduction and separation, and then offer a cost in

consideration of the volume of the order. Specifically, there are five fundamental steps to take when you first preview the artwork supplied by a customer. Follow these steps and you'll be well on your way to a seamless production process.

1. Look at the garment order

The first step is to understand the scope of the order – specifically the garment colors that will be used, the particular style of shirt and the total volume to be printed in the final production run. Most of the time this information is available when a client approaches a salesman for a quote, but occasionally they want a quote without an idea of what quantity they want, or they are trying to get an idea of how many to order to keep the cost reasonable. For instance, if a customer wants a detailed logo that needs six colors in the print but only wants two dozen shirts, the cost per piece will be very expensive. At that cost, the entire order may be cancelled, or the job may be unprofitable for the printer because of the amount of art and setup that is

SCREEN-PRINTING SUCCESS

Figure 1

These logos increase in complexity from left to right. Colored or textured backgrounds, multiple colors or rendered gradients will make separations increasingly difficult and drive up costs.



Figure 2

Use white as an underbase with colored T-shirts so the garment color won't affect the logo. Compare the muted printing of the top row (which doesn't have a white underbase) to the pristine results of the bottom row (which does). Factor it into the cost when evaluating a logo.



Figure 3 This logo may seem complex, but in reality only three colors are needed to print it: yellow, red and black. Fewer colors will save on cost.



Figure 4 Create a proof to show customers how their logo will appear on the garment. If possible, use a simulated halftone to show the large dots of screen printing and how it will render the logo.

required. With those details in mind, screen printers could suggest a simpler logo with fewer colors to maintain profit and satisfy the client's budget.

2. Review the file type

Assuming the volume of the order in comparison to the logo is a good match, the next step is to look at the artwork and see what file type was provided. A quick review of the file extension of the art will generally tell you what you are dealing with. The following list shows the most common file extensions (a file extension is the abbreviation at the end of a file after a dot, such as in a file named logo.jpg):

.jpg & .gif – These are the most common image files found on the Internet. These files are a fixed resolution, which means they are a digital picture made up of a set number of pixels (small squares of color) that recreate the images. These file types are typically not “camera-ready,” meaning that both resolution adjustments and some separation tasks will need to be performed.

.tif, .png & .raw – Files of this type are usually image files from photos or scans. The resolution and quality will still need to be determined, but the majority of the time some separation and retouching will need to be done to extract colors, shapes and typography.



.ai, .eps & .cdr – The files that are provided in these styles are usually vector files, meaning that they are printer-friendly (known as “camera-ready art”), and they are composed of shapes that can be quickly edited and separated. Occasionally a bitmap file will be placed into these programs instead of the original source file, so it is still important to open the file with the appropriate software prior to final pricing.

.doc & .pub – These files are scary for printers because of the nature of the software. Designs that are produced in Word or Publisher are sometimes functional, but often need to be completely recreated to transfer into a printing separation program.

.pdf – This type of file is a publication file and can include any type of image file. Sometimes it is an image file of a logo and it needs a complete recreation, and other times it will import into vector software and output perfectly fine.

There are other file extensions that are common but less seen (.psd is a Photoshop extension that is occasionally printer-ready), and some additional ones that sign or graphics companies use. It is prudent to specify beforehand with customers the type of file extensions you prefer to make set-up quick and easy.

3. Open the file and check for resolution and compatibility

It is not likely that a distributor salesperson has the software required to view all of the graphic file formats, so there needs to be an interaction to view the file and then produce a final decision on pricing and production. The majority of the simple image files can be viewed in an Internet browser, e-mail software or add-on software (such as Adobe Reader). Once the file is viewable, some simple issues can be covered for screen-printing reproduction. Issues such as resolution and complexity can be quickly determined so that any serious concerns are brought up in the initial stages of the order. This will avoid a situation where a certain look is expected but screen printing can’t deliver the exact results.

One way to handle logos is to first look at the overall size of the file. An image prepared for the Internet will commonly have an actual viewable size of 72dpi (dots per inch). This is not good enough for a screen-printing reproduction, so when a client sends you a logo from their website, it is usually going to have to be recreated for separation. If you right-click on a logo, you can often get the “file properties” dialog and then see the resolution of the file. A good rule is to try to have at least 3.5 times the output resolution for an image’s actual size for it to hold a good shape. This means that a four-inch logo would need to be at least 200dpi to be of good enough quality if the output is done at 55dpi halftone (an average dpi number for screen printing). Images that have very sharp edges and small typography probably need at least 300dpi to be good enough.

The issue of image compatibility with screen printing is a more complicated one, something very dependent on the logo composition. Simple logos that are presented against a white background are easy enough to

quote. The job gets more difficult with a number of additional factors: images that are shown on a colored or textured background, have a lot of colors, or that have rendered gradients of colors, drop-shadows, or different visual effects on them. (Figure 1.) Anything that is very small, fuzzy-looking, or really delicate should be reviewed closely, because screen printing uses larger dots than traditional printing.

4. Consider the number of colors for separation

The color of the garments that the logo will be printed on is a huge factor with separations. White shirts are easiest to work with. Anything else will need additional consideration – most likely a white under print that will block the shirt color from influencing the overprinted colors. (Figure 2.)

Once the shirt colors are decided upon, the ink colors needed to produce the image can be selected. If you don’t have much experience with separations, it would be a good idea at this point to consult an experienced separation artist to find out how many colors an image will need. Often this will not be estimated correctly, and sometimes colors can be saved or used to create other colors, which certainly helps with costs. (Figure 3.)

Logo designs will occasionally need a color match to a Pantone color for some or all of the colors in the image. In those cases, it is necessary to cover with the client that color matching through screen printing is actually color simulation (since the shirt or underbase white print is not a true white like paper), and some variance to the color is to be expected.

A final color consideration is contrast against the potential background. A logo needs to be legible on the shirt color that will be printed. Often a logo that is designed on a white background may not appear functional or legible on a dark garment without some outlining or editing to the file. Colors may have to be swapped out, or certain areas may need to be changed to properly create enough contrast for the final product to look good.

5. Create a proof for final approval

The best way to handle final approval is to create an art proof that shows the graphic on top of the background color. Some shops will go to the trouble of also showing the logo converted into a simulated halftone on these proofs in the proper screen-printed colors, which can help define if the client will have an issue with the larger dots. (Figure 4.) High-volume screen-printing shops will commonly have this proofing process scripted out so that their artists don’t have to go through and separate and digitally mock up each and every job for estimation.

Dealing with customer-supplied logos is a non-stop process of learning, adapting, and manipulation of graphics from one process to another. The more components of a systemized process that you can establish – reviewing, estimating and proofing logos – the better you will be able to maintain profit through each step of the fulfillment process.

Thomas Trimmingham is a contributing writer for Wearables.

Specialty Ink Spectacular

Captivate niche audiences with these brilliant ink selections.

BY CHRISTOPHER RUVO

Specialty inks can be a boon to a screen printer's business. If used and marketed correctly, these inks can potentially help printers key in on niche markets, upsell and impress current customers, and differentiate themselves in a marketplace where more competitors seem to crowd into the picture daily. "If you're making a play for a special niche or you already serve certain niches, specialty inks can be a viable investment," says Tom Trimingham, a leading screen-printing artist, consultant and author.

Before venturing into specialty inks, it's important to familiarize yourself with the different varieties. "You want to find out the bumps in the road before you get hit with orders," Trimingham says, noting you can reach out to ink suppliers and other printers for advice.

To help get you going, *Wearables* breaks down five types of specialty inks that printers are experiencing success with.

"Next Generation" Water-Based

What Is It: Water-based inks use water as the main solvent. Other solvents are typically incorporated to decrease the time and heat necessary to cure the ink. While water-based inks are nothing new and have widespread use, recent developments in the products make them worthy of special attention. They don't dry as fast in the screen and you can print on dark garments. "There is a new generation of water-based that is friendly to print with," says Ryan Moor, CEO of Ryonet Corp. (asi/528500), a supplier of screen-printing equipment and supplies.

Tell Me More: The main advantage of water-based inks is that they produce prints with an extremely soft hand – softer than traditional plastisol ink. Great for printing on everything from towels to T-shirts and sweatshirts, certain "next gen" water-based inks, such as R20, don't have PVC or phthalates, which appeals more to eco-minded clients.

Heads-Up: Despite advances, water-based is still more difficult to print and cure than plastisol. If you want to get into production-scale



▲ Reflective inks appear as normal but become brilliantly bright when headlights or a flashlight shine on them.

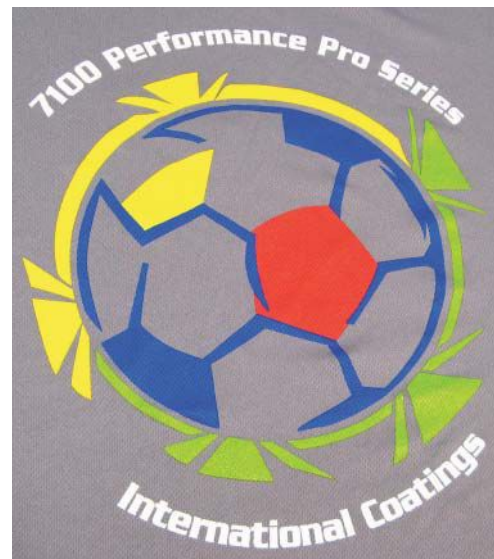
printing with water-based ink, you're going to need a decent conveyor dryer and flash dryer. "Without this, you will not be able to drive the water out of the ink in order to cure the binder," says Moor.

Potential Markets: Anyone looking for a soft-hand, retail-style print is a potential buyer. In particular, eco-conscious customers and buyers whose intended end-users include children may be drawn to the ink because of its "green" qualities. "Everyone from Nike to your local day care is requesting this ink," says Moor.

High Density

What Is It: High-density inks create bold, three-dimensional prints. Offering a smooth matte finish and distinct edge definition, the finished print delivers an eye-catching graphic that's elevated from the fabric. Often used for a special-effects application in the fashion world, these dense inks are now making inroads with athletic wear companies.

Tell Me More: Most compatible with 100% cotton and some cotton/poly blends, high-density inks can be printed through screen mesh ranging from a count of 61 to 158. "The most commonly used mesh count is 86,



▲ The 7100 Performance Pro Series from International Coatings is a fast-flashing ink made specifically for printing on polyester and synthetic blends. Available from Ryonet Corp. (asi/528500; circle 127 on Free Info Card).

but artwork may require different screens for different effects," according to the team at One Stroke Inks, an ink manufacturer. Additionally, printers will need a thicker emulsion stencil or capillary film (200-400 micron typically) to hold more ink.

Heads-Up: While printable with both manual and automatic presses, high-density ink is

slow to work, so it's best-suited for automated machines. The inks may fade after multiple washes and can be subject to inconsistencies in spots. Also, an HD print's thickness requires more heat and dwell time in the dryer and that the exposure will be much slower than a regular screen stencil.

Potential Markets: Start-up clothing brands. Younger-demographic tech firms interested in a distinctive look. Buyers of athletic wear. All these and more are potential clients for HD ink prints, which could even be pitched as a possible alternative to embroidery.

Reflective

What Is It: This ink contains light-reflecting microspheres. When a garment with a reflective ink print is exposed to a focused beam of light like a headlight or flashlight, the ink reflects the light back to the light source.

Tell Me More: To get the best results, reflective ink should be printed on open-weave fabrics, though great graphics have been produced on some tightly-woven nylon and polyester garments. When printing a reflective ink like Optilux 505 on cotton and cotton/poly blends, the experts at Ryonet say to use one flood stroke and one print stroke. While it's wise to eschew using an underbase when printing on typical T-shirt type fabrics, an underbase can help produce the cleanest print on some nylon and polyester garments.

Heads-Up: The reflective particle in the ink has to be properly placed in the carrying base. If the ink is buried, it won't show up. Moor recommends using 156 mesh: "The ink cannot be stacked or the reflective properties will be lost."

Potential Markets: Reflective is big with construction companies, landscapers, municipal road crews and police and fire departments. Still, buyers of bike and race wear, along with fashion-forward clients looking for a unique effect, are also possible clients.

"Performance/Polyester"

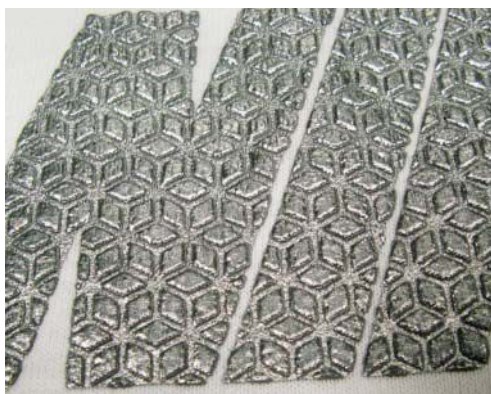
What Is It: With the explosion in popularity of performance fabrics, demand for specialty inks that enable quality printing on polyester, poly-blends and the like has increased. These days, manufacturers offer ink solutions to combat the biggest problem with printing on performance fabrics: dye migration. These include low-bleed plastisol inks – usually white – with bleed-blocking additives and low-fusing plastisol inks



▲ Newer water-based inks allow for printing on dark garments with an extremely soft hand. photos courtesy of Ryonet Corp. (asi/528500)



▲ High-density inks create sharp, defined prints in three dimensions.



▲ The 220 Puff Additive from International Coatings through Ryonet Corp. (asi/528500; circle 127 on Free Info Card) creates a raised effect with screen-printing decoration.

that cure at lower temperatures.

Tell Me More: Low-fusing plastisol inks have come a long way recently. There is, for example, the 7100 Performance Pro Series from International Coatings, which is a low-fusing, fast-flashing, low-tack plastisol-based ink comprised of 18 colors and one base that is specifically made for printing on polyester, cotton/poly blends, cotton/synthetic fabric blends, and other synthetic performance fabrics.

Heads-Up: The main thing to consider here is

heat. To avoid dye migration, low-fusing "poly" ink like the 7100 series has to cure at a lower temperature. A temperature of 275 to 300 degrees Fahrenheit is generally the suggested range. International Coatings recommends doing a test on dryer temperatures and a wash test on the printed product before and during a production run. Additionally, any direct or indirect emulsion or capillary film in the 35 to 70 micron range should be used for best results. Lower mesh counts are recommended.

Potential Markets: Possible buyers include teams, race events, schools, gym-wear brands, and businesses that want to offer performance threads to employees.

Puff, Suede & BlowOut

What Are They: These three varieties contain puffing agents that cause ink to rise on the garment and, in Moor's words, "feel fluffy to the touch."

Tell Me More: As the name suggests, Puff produces a raised or puff effect. Similarly, BlowOut blisters and bubbles up to form a unique spongy and multi-textured surface. Suede, a denser ink, acts as a dulling agent, reducing gloss and producing a print that has a raised suede feel and appearance. "Puff has always been big in children's wear because the ink stands off the shirt and is simply fun. The other two inks are also used often in this market," says Moor.

Heads-Up: Since puff is an additive that is used with normal plastisol ink, printers must make sure to mix it correctly so desired results can be repeated consistently. With BlowOut, keep in mind that too much heat can cause the ink to become sticky after flashing, so adjust your unit accordingly. When spot drying, the ink should be just dry to the touch, with no lift off, but not totally fused. If you want to achieve a proper look with suede, add 10% to 15% of the suede additive to the ink by weight.

"A gram scale for mixing and good dryer to ensure proper and consistent heat is important with all these," Moor says.

Potential Markets: Companies producing apparel for children may like the fun, 3-D effects these inks offer. Schools represent another opportunity, as do custom automotive businesses and, in the case of suede particularly, trucking companies.

Christopher Ruvo is a staff writer for Wearables. Follow him on Twitter @ChrisR_ASI and contact him at cruvo@asicentral.com.

EQUIPMENT CORNER

The latest in machines and decoration products

MACHINES



Avalanche 1000 – Kornit Digital

The Avalanche 1000 by Kornit Digital (*asi/14972*; circle 131 on Free Info Card) is the fastest direct-to-garment printer offered by Kornit. The printer features piezo-electric print heads as well as a backup battery system. For better efficiency, the Avalanche 1000 also includes an integrated professional humidity system. The key feature of the printer is its improved speed and greater performance abilities.

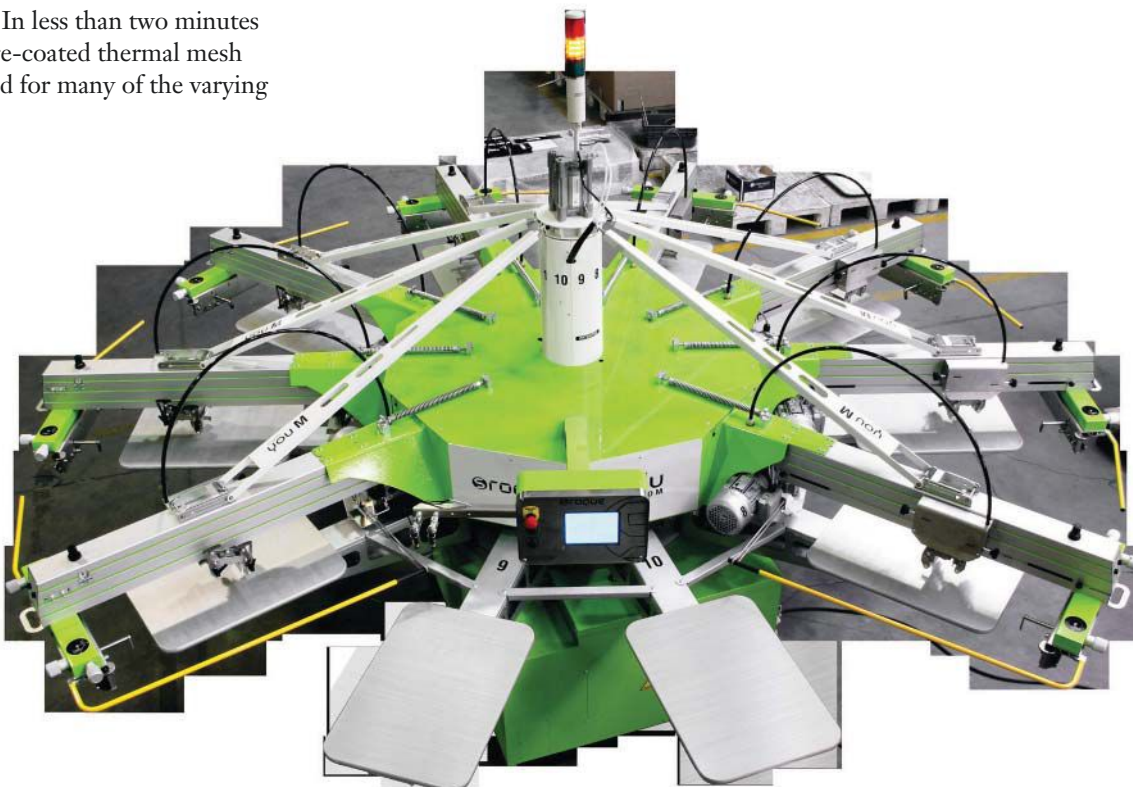


EcoPROdts Exposure Unit – XpresScreen

EcoPROdts is the newest addition to the exposure units category from XpresScreen (*asi/14703*; circle 130 on Free Info Card). Its computer-to-screen technology makes the EcoPROdts user-friendly, clean and efficient in every way. In less than two minutes an image-ready screen can be created. Pre-coated thermal mesh counts of 80, 120, 180 and 225 are offered for many of the varying types of print jobs out there.

sRoque YOU Automatic Screen-Printing Press – Ryonet Corp.

The automatic screen-printing press, sRoque YOU, is the newest screen-printing press from Ryonet Corp. (*asi/528500*; circle 127 on Free Info Card). It features an extra-large print area of 16 x 20 meters as well as 18 pallets and up to 16 available colors. The press also features honeycomb aluminum pallets, a lateral frame-pressing SR system, and print heads with high-lift position for easy, timely cleaning. The central command has an LCD touchscreen for extra convenience.



EQUIPMENT



S-100 Rolling Stand – Vastext International

This new S-100 low-cost stand from Vastext International (circle 132 on Free Info Card) works for screen-exposing units, compact infrared conveyor dryers, and various screen-printing equipment. The 76 x 84 cm top has embossed pockets for Vastex E100 and E1000 exposing units. Sturdy and strong at 74 cm tall, the stand can accommodate a weight of up to 30 pounds.



Compatible Air Compressor - Hotronix

Compatible with its Air Fusion, Tabletop Air Fusion, and Air Swinger model heat presses, this air compressor, offered through Hotronix (circle 133 on Free Info Card), is priced in a way that's difficult to beat at \$599. The commercial-grade unit has a 6.6 gallon capacity and $\frac{3}{4}$ horsepower. It calls for single-phase electricity and is conveniently able to be plugged into any regular household unit. The compressor has a start/stop motor and does 2.5 cubic feet per minute, working with one heat press at a time.

EMULSION



KIWOCOL Poly-Plus emulsion – Graphic Solutions Group

Available from Graphic Solutions Group (circle 129 on Free Info Card), this Kiwo diazo dual-cure emulsion – called KIWOCOL Poly-Plus ER – makes reclaiming easy thanks to its instant-dissolve characteristic. It works best for screens cleaned in automatic reclaiming equipment. It also reduces latent images and is more stain-resistant with mesh than comparable products, reducing the need for caustic haze-removers. Its high-solids content calls for fewer coats with the same thickness achievements. The emulsion reduces shrinkage, improves the print definition, and allows for an overall better resolution.

INK

Wilflex Oasis Water-Based Inks – PolyOne Corporation

PolyOne (circle 134 on Free Info Card) now offers its second generation of Wilflex Oasis water-based inks. In order to ensure optimum performance, the inks have been reformulated to enhance their performance capabilities. Not only are the inks production-friendly – they have a long screen life and more efficient design qualities.



Pro Photo Transfer Ink – Sawgrass Technologies

SubliJet-IQ Pro Photo Sublimation Transfer Ink is the latest sublimation transfer ink by Sawgrass Technologies (circle 135 on Free Info Card). The new ink has been optimized for reproduction of high-definition photographs on photographic panels such as ChromaLuxe. The eight-color ink set promises high-contrast blacks, fine gradations and subtle skin tones.

TRANSFERS

Permanent Twill Names – Dalco Athletic

No sewing is necessary for these new twill names introduced by Dalco Athletic (circle 136 on Free Info Card). The process of adding a name to the back of a tee is made easy for customers by just adding heat. A pressure-sensitive adhesive backing keeps the name in place during application. These permanent twill names are available in athletic and school colors for a one-color application, while font sizes run from 2 to 2½ inches. Twill names are compatible with cotton, polyester, and cotton/polyester blends.



Thermo-FILM Precut Kits – Stahls' ID Direct

Precut letters and numbers in Thermo-FILM from Stahls' ID Direct (*asi/88984*; circle 137 on Free Info Card) are an ideal choice for decorating team uniforms. They are made of a durable material that will outlast the life of the garment. Thermo-FILM's superior opacity stops strike-through on polyester and sublimated garments. Available in 20 popular athletic colors, Thermo-FILM quickly heat-applies in six to eight seconds at 330 degrees Fahrenheit. It can be safely laundered and dry-cleaned.

EQUIPMENT SPOTLIGHT: Athletic Numbering Systems

BY TONIA COOK KIMBROUGH

The school year kicks off for many students this month, and with that comes the need for team uniforms. Add in community leagues and professional teams for fall sports and you've got a sizable client base. However, to land these orders, you need the ability to personalize uniforms with individual names and numbers. Numbering is one of the trickiest aspects of teamwear for screen printers, but it doesn't have to be.

An option that many shops embrace is to use stencils or heat transfers to create jersey numbers. While those work well for small jobs, it can become very tedious for large leagues or booster clubs. Not only do heat transfers require a heat press, they can also vary in position or quality depending on the talent of the operator in placing the numbers consistently and the amount of heat applied. Add to the mix weeding and peeling numbers and you quickly see the process isn't ideal for volume orders.

"Athletic printing is one of the largest segments of the screen-printing business, and research shows that the majority of screen printers do not have a way to effectively print numbers on uniforms," says Heather Ashlock, marketing project coordinator for Ryonet Corp. (asi/528500). "Numbering can either be a huge pain or add huge profit to your business."

In an effort to veer screen printers toward the latter, Ryonet has devised a complete screen-printing numbering system that attaches to any screen-printing press. The company offers two options: a one-color and two-color numbering system. Each has a master frame for numbers constructed out of high-grade aluminum (as well as zinc-

plated steel for the registered number frame pin holes, which are laser-engraved and marked for easy alignment). In addition, the kits include 10 individual number frames stretched with 110 mesh (20 or 30 additional exposed frames for the two-color kit); one to three screen racks for organized storage and easy access while printing; and Ergo Force squeegees, which come in a variety of sizes ideal for printing numbers.

As you compare options, Ashlock recommends that you consider the amount of time and effort each system requires. "When looking for a way to make printing numbers easier, screen printers



These complete screen-printing numbering systems from Ryonet Corp. (asi/528500; circle 127 on Free Info Card) attach to any screen-printing press and come in two options: a one-color and two-color numbering system.

SCREEN-PRINTING SUCCESS

should be looking for something that allows them to do those projects with the most efficiency possible – something that helps ensure consistency and accuracy as that will increase the professional quality of their work, which will empower them to profit more,” she says. “Having a system dedicated to numbering is the most organized way to approach this.”

You’ll find a variety of athletic numbering systems available in a range of price points. Vastex, for example, offers a solution that converts most any rear-clamp manual press into a numbering machine in 20 seconds. Chris Thomas, spokesperson for Atlas Screen Supply Company, recommends the Vastex DiGiT

Numbering System to screen printers that want to expand their business to teams and booster clubs but don’t want to make a huge investment in a dedicated press. The Vastex DiGiT Numbering System allows you to print consecutive numbers as quickly as regular spot printing. The DiGiT Slide locates each number for speed and precision, and an easy-to-see sight rail with a yellow target makes registration a snap. The system claims to number up to 120 shirts per hour.

If you’re ready to invest in a dedicated numbering press, consider the M&R Abacus II, offered by Graphic Solutions Group. This is a two-station numbering press featuring a

20-print head duo-deck configuration, which facilitates the printing of two-color numbers. It has an indexing system with an advanced touchscreen user interface that allows for accurate positioning of any digit size or type. Users simply enter the dimensions of the digits to be printed and the gap between the digits. The Abacus II automatically positions each pallet for correct digit placement during the print cycle.

There are many options on the market to up your game for athletic numbering. Talk with your equipment supplier about which solutions will work best for you.

Tonia Cook Kimbrough is a contributing writer for Wearables.

GET IN THE GAME

Three of the top five markets for selling decorated apparel likely require numbering for jerseys or T-shirts. A market analysis by *Wearables’* sister magazine, *Stitches*, in its 2013 State of the Industry, placed Education/Schools, Associations/Clubs and Sports Teams in slots two, three and four, collectively making up 32% of decorated apparel sales. Each of these markets uses numbered apparel and accessories to outfit group members or to excite a fan base.



The Vastex DiGiT Numbering System is a press attachment that can produce up to 120 shirts per hour. Available from Atlas Screen Supply Company (circle 128 on Free Info Card).



If you need a dedicated numbering press, look to the M&R Abacus II from Graphic Solutions Group (circle 129 on Free Info Card), which features a 20-print head duo-deck configuration for two-color numbers.

Behind The Screens With...

Terry Keeven,
St. Louis
Print Co.
(asi/700623)



How does a high school dropout start his own screen-print company and reach 50% annual growth?

Terry Keeven, owner of St. Louis Print Co. (asi/700623), talks about his start in the business and the number-one rule for new screen printers.

Q: How did you first get involved with screen printing?

Terry Keeven: I dropped out of high school when I was 16 to take a job offloading an automatic press at a larger screen-printing company in the St. Louis area. By the time I was 19, I was promoted to shop supervisor. I left that job at 21 to take the position of general manager at a much larger operation. Four years later, I left that company to start my own screen-printing shop. I started with one automatic and one manual, and now six years later we run five autos and seven manuals along with multiple heat presses.

Q: How do you meet quick turnarounds and keep clients happy?

TK: Quick turnarounds, meaning two- to four-day lead times, are very challenging. They require more staff and much more attention to detail. We set ourselves up to accommodate these tight lead times in the beginning, so we do it very well.

Q: What kinds of challenges do you think screen printers are currently experiencing? What's your advice for meeting those challenges?

TK: I see many of my peers struggling with customer service. They do not want to pay the salaries it takes to have a great support system set up in the front office. We have a rule here that no e-mail goes unanswered for more than an hour. Also, the phones must be answered within four rings. Every one of our clients is assigned the same customer service rep and

artist for every order they place. Our customer service reps have an extensive background in screen printing so they know what they're talking about, when speaking with customers.

Q: What's the secret to balancing quality work and good customer service?

TK: You have to know and understand your market. Our largest presses are only eight colors. For a shop of our size, that is rare. You would expect us to have 12- to 18-color capabilities, but our market does not typically call for such high color counts. We understand that we cater to the promotional products industry and not the hot market or retail sectors that may demand higher-end specialized printing methods. Our office staff and managers are very familiar with what our clients expect with each order.



St. Louis Print Co. (asi/700623) started with two machines and now boasts a dozen screen-printing presses and multiple heat presses.

photo courtesy of St. Louis Print Co. (asi/700623)

Q: What's one piece of advice you can give anyone looking to break into screen printing?

TK: Learn how to print first and buy the best equipment you can afford. Used equipment, especially if you aren't experienced, will just cause frustration and headache. Understand your specific market and target that area hard. Also, make sure to keep up with your books! That one is so very important in any business. I see so many small-business owners who handle their books as well as I know how to fly a rocket to the moon. If you do not watch your numbers on a daily basis and keep your books tight and buttoned up, you have no idea if you're making money or on your way out of business.

Q: What's the number-one goal for your company in 2013?

TK: In 2012 and the beginning of 2013 we went through a pretty major growth spurt, and I financed most of the expense. Our goal this year is to pay off the debt we incurred. We have been growing by over 50% each year since we started in 2007. During this last growth spurt, we took over an additional 3,000 square feet plus another office, and we added an automatic press, two manuals and a dryer, and an additional exposure unit and reclaim area. To keep up with the fast turn times, we add a couple of machines each year.

Q: What's one major challenge in running your screen-printing company?

TK: Any time we add space or equipment, it's stressful. One of the hardest things in running this company is forecasting our growth rate and adding enough capacity to handle the large flow of business that will come in during specific seasons without going overboard and ending up with too much capacity. That can really kill your cash flow, or even put you out of business if you get in over your head.

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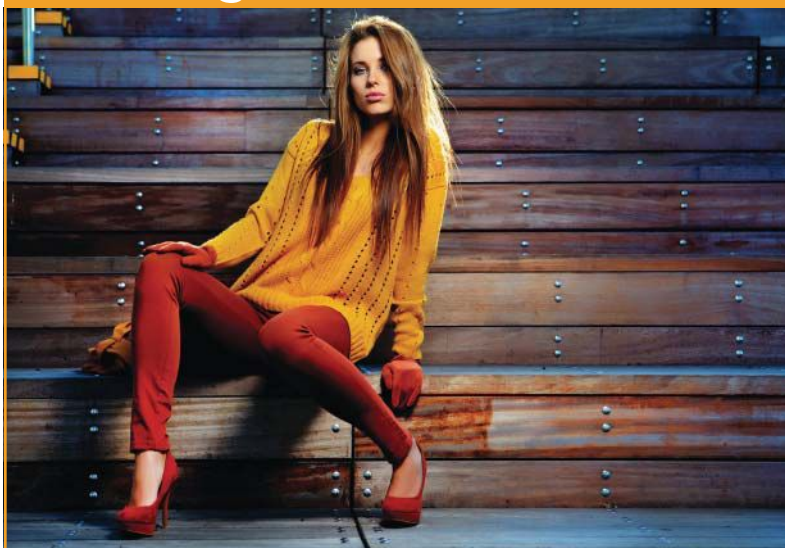
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coming next issue what's coming up in the September issue of *Wearables*



As The Leaves Turn..

So do the fashions of the season. We spotlight the hottest apparel trends for Fall in our high-fashion photo shoot for our annual Style Issue. You don't want to miss it.

Setting The Trends

Who are the people in the industry who elevate the style quotient? We meet the supplier designers, decoration visionaries and creative distributor minds who are raising the bar. Come meet the *Wearables* Trendsetters.

And Then There Were Three

We are now at the second-to-last challenge in our year-long Top Decorator competition. This time, the remaining competitors have to revamp an old brand for new-school tastes. A berth in the finals is on the line.

Calling All Screen Printers

Be sure to check out each issue of *Wearables* for your screen-printing needs. We have all the coverage on the newest products, essential equipment and leading techniques.

And much, much more!



ARTWORK

Decoding the secrets of creative decorated apparel

BY SARA LAVENDUSKI

Supersize Me

Vapor Apparel (*asi/93396*; circle 116 on Free Info Card), which specializes in custom sublimated apparel, recently decided to accommodate the growing demand for large-format garment printing on retail-inspired items. To that end, the company launched its new Fashion Fit line featuring fashion-forward cuts. "When you first see and touch our Fashion Fit line,"

says Chris Bernat, chief revenue officer, "you notice the fabric's incredibly soft hand and vibrant color production. With an all-over print, it becomes a high-end shirt or dress ready for a night on the town or even a fashionable cover-up for the beach." To demonstrate the possibilities, Vapor's in-house graphic artist, Todd Hirshman, created this custom print.

True Colors:

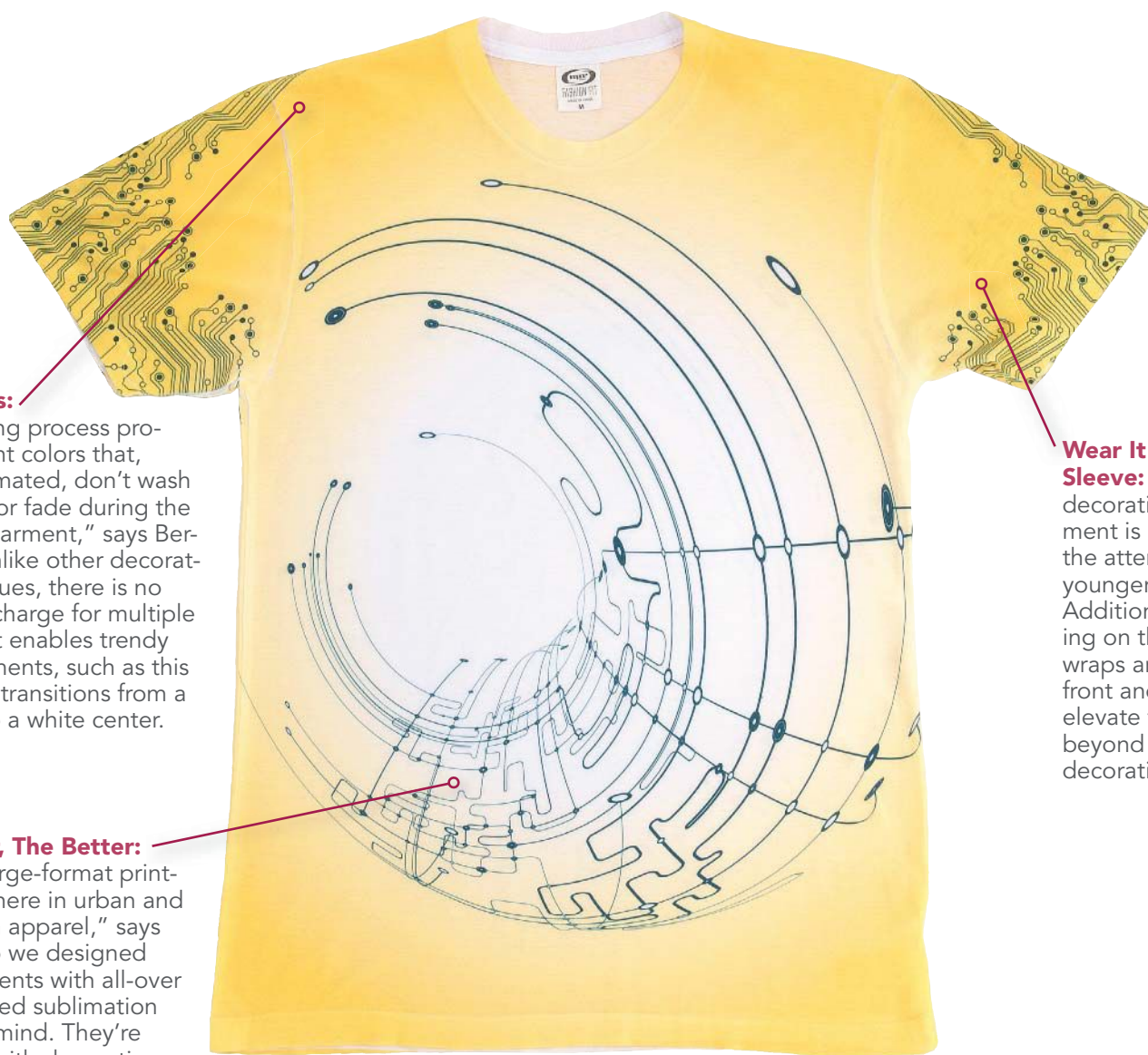
"The printing process provides radiant colors that, when sublimated, don't wash out, crack, or fade during the life of the garment," says Bernat. And unlike other decorating techniques, there is no additional charge for multiple colors. That enables trendy color treatments, such as this yellow that transitions from a rich gold to a white center.

The Larger, The Better:

"You see large-format printing everywhere in urban and mainstream apparel," says Bernat. "So we designed these garments with all-over and oversized sublimation printing in mind. They're a huge hit with decorating shops and retailers looking to supply their customers with the latest apparel trends."

Wear It On Your Sleeve:

Unusual decoration placement is capturing the attention of the younger crowds. Additional detailing on the sleeves wraps around the front and back to elevate the look beyond a standard decoration.



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