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Embroidery's Voice & Vision

January 2014



the
PRODUCTIVITY
ISSUE



2014



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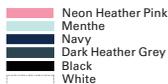
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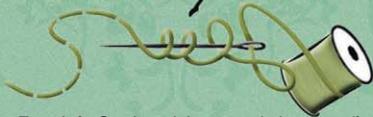
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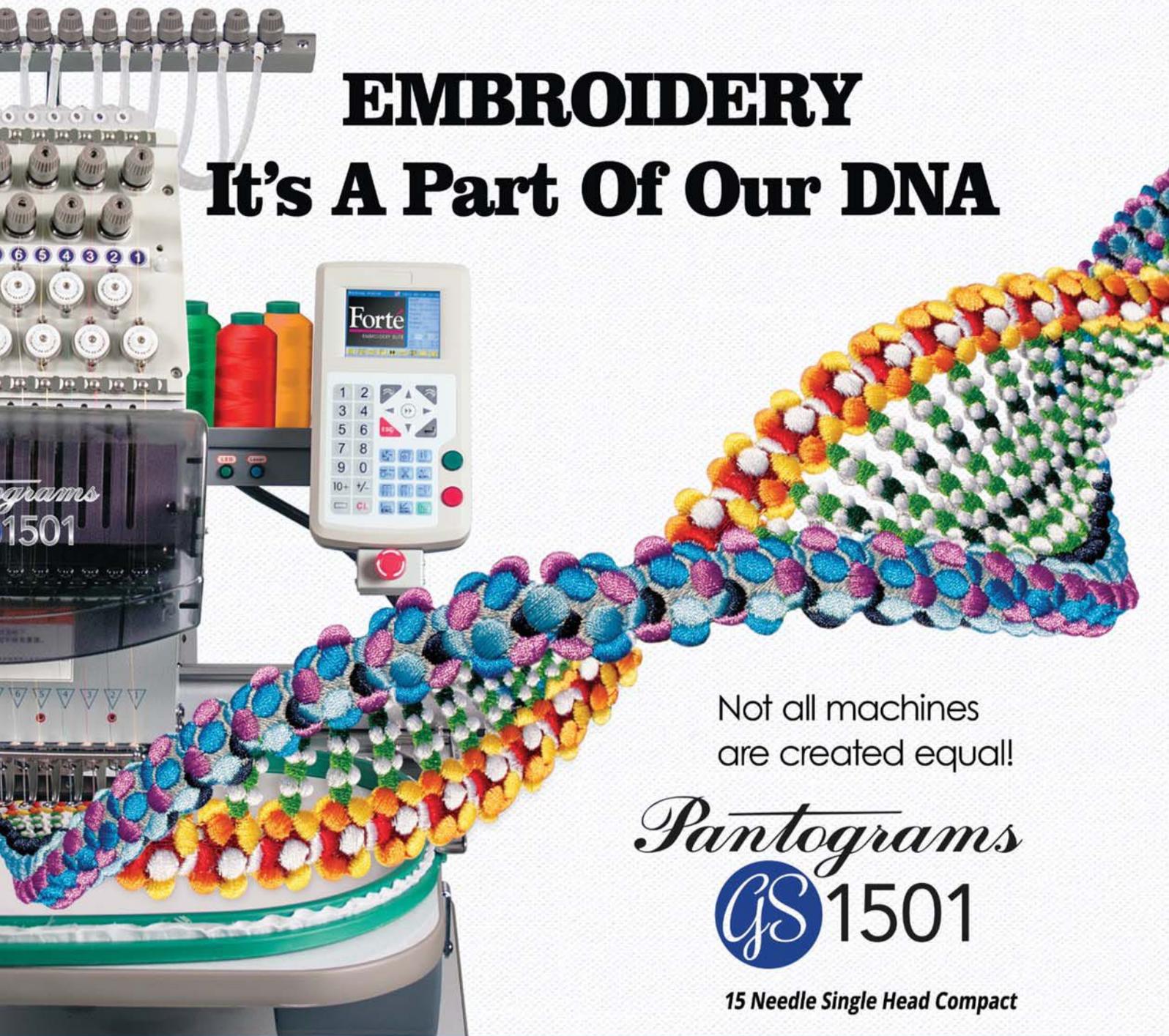
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You'll learn super strategies for streamlining your order management, setting up your shop for optimum workflow, minimizing machine downtime and more.

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Design: Melissa Lascalea

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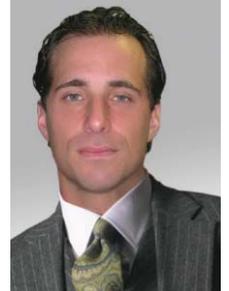
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FOR EVERY ONE.



In the December 2013 “Power 75” issue, Jay Malanga’s profile on page 49 ran with the incorrect image; we apologize for the error.

In this issue’s “Expert Weigh-In” in our “Interact” department, we chat with **RANDY CARR**, president and CEO of World Emblem International (asi/98264), who talks about his company’s new products, the solutions his company offers for decorators and current challenges for suppliers. “Suppliers shouldn’t allow themselves to be undercut on price if they’re offering good quality,” he says. “Markets are all competitive, and I see some suppliers losing money on orders just to keep a customer. The products we sell have value and that value needs to be transmitted to the end-user. If customers want a good product, they shouldn’t be looking for the cheapest option.”



In this month’s new “Screen-Printing Success” column of our “Decorating Solutions” department, **TERRY KEEVEN**, owner of St. Louis-based St. Louis Print Co., tackles a common embroiderer dilemma: “I’m getting lots of requests for screen printing. What do I do?” In this installment, Keeven covers how to find, assess and choose a reputable contract screen printer. For example, have you considered whether a printer’s turn times are different from your own? Ask, “What are the printer’s turnaround times?” Keeven writes. “If you’ve been offering your clients four-to-seven-day turns on their orders, but your screen printer offers 10 to 15 days, this may cause an issue.”

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A Productive 2014



To kick off 2014, this issue will give you lots of smart strategies to make your shop more productive, from automating your order workflow to changing up your decorating-equipment workstations to allow your operators to work more efficiently. In addition to making over your shop, plan to take a look at how you're running your business, whether you're a home-based sole proprietor or heading up a large contract shop. A good way to get started is to check out what top entrepreneurs do to be successful.

Productivity guru Tim Ferris, author of the best-selling book *The 4-Hour Workweek* and host of *The Tim Ferris Experiment*, once worked 90 hours a week to grow his online supplement company, BrainQuicken; when he tired of his workaholic lifestyle, he developed ways for small business owners to make the best use of their time to run their businesses and increase sales. One of his top suggestions is to schedule a monthly 80/20 analysis of your efforts.

When you perform a regular 80/20 analysis of your business activities, your goal is to identify the 20% of activities that produce 80% of the results you want (like selling into markets that yield your best customers). You also should list the activi-

ties that are taking up 80% of your time, so you can see where to spend more and less time. "As a business owner, it's very easy to fall into the trap of being busy, and being busy is not necessarily productive," Ferris told BusinessInsider.com in a recent interview. "When you focus on the right things, and eliminate time spent on unhelpful tasks, you become more effective." As a shop owner, you can eliminate unnecessary tasks, automate others and look to delegate where you feel comfortable doing so.

Jon Taffer, successful restaurateur, author of *Raise the Bar* and host of Spike TV's popular show *Bar Rescue*, has worked to turn around 53 businesses (only five of which have since closed, resulting in a 90% success rate). A top tip: Know your operating costs so you're always operating in the black – and consider investing in software to track what you spend and earn. "There's nothing more important than staying on top of the numbers," Taffer recently told BusinessInsider.com. "What infuriates me when people don't is the fact that there are POS systems that will do all of this for you."

Enjoy the issue, and here's to a productive 2014!

Nicole M. Rollender

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Compiled by Sabrina Landry and Patricia Cangelosi

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Podcast: Production Tips

Stitches Senior Staff Writer Christopher Ruvo delivers quick tips for putting your shop on the path to greater production and efficiency.

10 Apparel Sales Trends

Brand names are important to buyers. The average wearables order size keeps growing. Moisture wicking is the most-requested performance property. For these and seven other need-to-know trends about selling apparel, visit Stitches.com for the results of *Wearables* magazine's annual Sales Forecast.

SOCIAL FEEDS



Facebook.com/stitchesmag
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We want to know how you motivate yourself when you get a case of the Mondays.

YOU ANSWERED ERICH CAMPBELL

A couple of things help. Take down a few of the low-hanging-fruit tasks that are easy to complete. Even if they aren't critical, the feeling of accomplishment can jump-start your engine. Other than that, I'll take a quick walk, do something creative like sketch for a few minutes, or talk to an industry friend about it via social media when I have a moment to break up the time. Other than that, coffee always helps. I recommend a blonde roast.

GARRETT KAULE

I start the morning off with at least three cups of coffee, minimum. I'll take a bike ride around the neighborhood before going into work. It really helps to get you up and moving after a long weekend. I'll usually start working on a project slowly, as I'm usually pretty slow on a Monday morning. After an hour or so, the groove starts to happen. I'll agree with Erich Campbell. I don't like tackling the hardest job first thing in the a.m.

ERICH CAMPBELL

Flow state is critical, for sure. I'm with Garrett Kaule about getting in the groove. It's hard when you get disrupted.

HOWARD POTTER

Not very hard to [motivate myself]. Just remember: Someone is always out looking for your customers.



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Congrats Len Cava for the write-up in the Delray Beach Pineapple! <http://fb.me/1bGui5Z4K>

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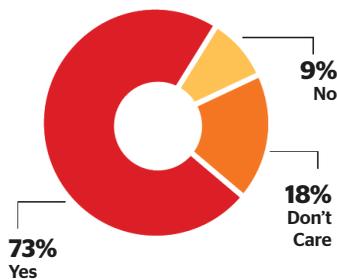
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INDUSTRY POLL

On Stitches.com, we recently asked:

Would you like to see thread manufacturers develop more "eco-friendly" threads?



BLOG EXCERPT

On Links and Needles The Top Reasons You Haven't Started That Project (Hint: They're All Fear)



Try as you might, something always comes up before you can really sink your teeth into the task at hand – some triviality, some emergency, some reason to avoid working on that needful project, that new venture, or that difficult design. There always seems to be a reason to start tomorrow rather than today. Just one more e-mail, one more round of planning, one more bit of quick cleaning or organizing; always one more barrier

between you and the work that you know you want or need to do. Of course, on rare occasions these roadblocks are really critical events that do demand your immediate attention, but for most of us, we are fully aware that some of the tasks we prioritize end up at the top of our list because they are simple, safe and reasonably productive enough to keep us from questioning why we aren't gunning for that big task on which we know we should focus.

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



Pinterest

Check out the following designs that we pinned on Stitches' Pinterest page - from the *Cool Embroidery Designs* and *Sequins, Rhinestones & Bling, Oh My!* Boards.

From the Board: Cool Embroidery Designs



This custom embroidery design by Just My Style Embroidery on custom upholstery by SPC Interiors debuted at the Sema Show in Las Vegas, and was showcased at the Ford Motor Co. display featuring the new Ford Transit Connect Hot Wheels Edition; it was also featured in *Motor Trend* magazine.



This single-color bed-and-breakfast logo was digitized without using any automatic fill tools for an old-fashioned look; by Cathy Cattle of Seward, NE-based Sew B It Custom Embroidery.



This Dickies Eisenhower Jacket back "Freaks of Nature" design is embroidery and hot-pink upholstery sparkle vinyl and zebra patterned vinyl/fabric for a car club; by R.J. Silva of Jacksonville, FL-based Eye Kandy Designs.



This "Cat in Tree" design was digitized and embroidered by Luiz Vitor of Brazil-based Vitor Digitizing.



This Medi-Vac helicopter design fits a 5X7 hoop; by Thomas Harrold of Greensburg, PA-based Small World Embroidery & More.



"Liquid Riders Rockstars" full motorcycle jacket back was embroidered by Alison Buchanan of Virginia, South Africa-based Sew Uppity.

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



This denim jacket features embroidery and rhinestones by Jane Swanzy of Houston-based Swan Threads LLC (asi/700627; circle 151 on Free Info Card).



This W7 jacket features an all-rhinestone design with the client's ranch brand included in the design by Jane Swanzy of Houston-based Swan Threads LLC (asi/700627; circle 151 on Free Info Card).

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

We're still getting letters in response to the Stitches Hopeful Hearts Quilt, which was featured in the August issue.

Quilting Passion

Being a quilter, I enjoyed the "Quilting for a Cause" article. Quilters love to look at other quilts. Being an embroiderer for 17 years, I've had the opportunity to embroider quilt squares for church groups that then present the quilts to charities. For myself, as owner of a busy embroidery company, I wish I had more spare time to create quilts myself. Thank you for the quilt article.

Carolyn Wolf
Wolf Embroidery

Sparkling Regards

Quilts that warm the body on a chilly night are one thing. Quilts that warm the heart are another, and you can see by the beautiful result that this project overflowed with warmth, dedication and love. The stories

told by these talented embroiderers really made me stop and think about each cause and/or disease, and how it can affect every friend or family member in their circle, and beyond. It also made me feel very grateful for my own good health. I really do hope this wonderful story won't end on these pages, but prompt many of the readers to give to a few of these causes. Just remember, we're all connected.

Lee Romano Sequeira
Sparkle Plenty Designs Inc.
(asi/88442)

Present and Future Productivity

The best way to be productive in your operation is to be aware of the newest art and digitizing software that will give life to your designs; in addition, be current on the

A reader weighs in on winning Stitches' Golden Needle Awards:

"I've found my way into two art galleries this past year! This step has really filled my niche market for custom pieces."

Cathy Cattle,
Sew B It Custom Embroidery

inventory-management systems. Do you know what your decorating equipment's full capabilities are, and have you checked out the latest attachments? For example, there are new mashing attachments that

lay down a string of beads.

It's a must to attend trade shows so you can get a clear understanding of the products and technology that's available to help your business grow. The added bonus of trade shows are the connections you make that will enhance your ability to grow your business.

Samanta Cortes
Fashion Design Concepts

E-commerce Advice

If you have no experience in e-commerce websites, a less-complicated starting point is to use existing widgets produced by some of the better suppliers. SanMar (asi/84863) has free tools. My company is about to launch a free online designer that will give you a private label designer that customers will love. The key point is that your customer can decide what type of dog he wants on his T-shirt before he comes to your office and takes an hour of your time. There are a lot of options out there. Look around.

Cory Dean
Artwork Source

VOILA!

The Best Piece I Ever Embroidered



"I came home from a networking meeting and was disappointed that none of my embroidered gifts sold. I decided my ship just hadn't come in yet, and that's because they're building me a bigger ship. You need to have hope, faith and love in life. I'm a self-taught digitizer and use Viking software.

The first time I stitched this design out, the registration was off when the outline stitched. In other designs, I'd split the design apart and put the pieces back together in the customizing program. It also worked well with this design. I put a registration running stitch where the next part of the design would meet. This way, if the running stitch didn't line up right, I could make adjustments before the other part of the design stitched. I did the ship first, then the water, then the sails and the text. I combined the design, but not the colors because if I did so, I'd lose the separation between design pieces and my registration would be off. It took me one hour and 15 minutes to stitch this out on my Melco Amaya XT machine."

Submitted by Lydia Young, owner of Just 4 YOU Embroidery, Grabill, IN; just4u@frontier.com

ASI CAN HELP

ASI can provide you with a powerful e-commerce website that's stocked with embroidery-ready items, available as part of the Stitches Membership Package. The ESP Company store e-commerce solution is fully customizable, virtual sample-ready and social media compatible. Call (877) 276-0292 for information or visit www.joinstitches.com/preview to see a demo of the e-commerce solution.

Expert Weigh-In



Randy Carr, president and CEO of World Emblem International (asi/98264), talks about his company's new products, the solutions his company offers for decorators and current challenges for suppliers. Contact: Erin Gallagher, business development manager, efaust@worldemblem.com.

We're a world leader in our industry. World Emblem International Inc. is one of the world's foremost designers and manufacturers of both industrial and domestic wash, embroidered, digitally printed and sublimated emblems. In addition, we're also a leading manufacturer of custom transfers, direct screen printing, direct embroidery, high-visibility striping, name badges and much more. We're headquartered in Miami and we have an ultra-modern 60,000-square-foot facility that's one of the largest and best equipped in the country. True to our name, we're a global leader in the identification market, with six manufacturing facilities throughout the U.S., as well as Canada, Mexico, France and the U.K.

We're seeing several trends gaining traction, and we're meeting demand. While we mainly work in the uniform industry, the resellers with whom we work have supplied emblems to all types of industries, including fashion. We offer fire-resistant emblems to be used on fire-resistant uniforms. With all of the safety requirements in the workplace, we've also added High Visibility Striping. Customers supply their garments

and we can add the striping to increase safety and meet American National Standards Institute (ANSI) requirements.

We also offer Reusable Name Badges from Name Badges International, another one of our companies, that can be personalized in-house by downloading our template, printing the customers' names and then sliding them into the badges. Most of our apparel decorations are designed to hold up in industrial wash so that they can withstand the harshest chemicals and wash cycles used by the industrial laundries with whom we frequently work.

As far as imprint location, a significant number of customers are now requesting their company logo on the sleeve instead of the left chest.

High Visibility Striping and Domed Name Tags are in high demand. We launched High-Visibility Striping about two years ago. Clients supply their apparel and we enhance the safety with highly visible and reflective striping. With all of the safety requirements in the workplace, this area continues to grow.

We launched Name Badges International a little over two years ago, and from

there we supply customized and personalized domed name tags. One of our newest product lines is Digital Print Emblems, which are high-quality, digitally printed patches that can be laser-cut or feature a merrow border.

“Most of our apparel decorations are designed to hold up in industrial wash so that they can withstand the harshest chemicals and wash cycles used by the industrial laundries with whom we frequently work.”

We specialize in delivering large orders, but we'll work with clients of all sizes. We make larger orders quickly without sacrificing price or quality. I always recommend outsourcing larger orders to us. It saves time,

money and the headache of trying to do this alone. We're accustomed to working with resellers of all sizes. Smaller decorators usually have one storefront; we give them the ability to drop ship to any of our nine locations and we can ship back to the end-user. Being a strong supplier partner for us means we add value in every transaction with business expertise, reporting and efficiency.

Suppliers shouldn't allow themselves to be undercut on price if they're offering good quality. Markets are all competitive, and I see some suppliers losing money on orders just to keep a customer. The products we sell have value and that value needs to be transmitted to the end-user. If customers want a good product, they shouldn't be looking for the cheapest option.

In my spare time, I'm a true bookworm. I read two books a week at least. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey is always a good read at least once a year.

LEARN IT LIVE

Best-selling author Stephen M. R. Covey will present "Leadership and Selling at the Speed of Trust" at the ASI Show in Chicago on July 15, 2014. Visit www.asishow.com for more details and to register.

INTERACT

Problem Solved

Q *My relatively new shop is growing – and that’s a good thing – but I’m having some trouble with task management. I wear many hats – run the business, market, sell and more. What’s the best way for me to handle task management? Use a to-do list? Download an app onto my smartphone?*

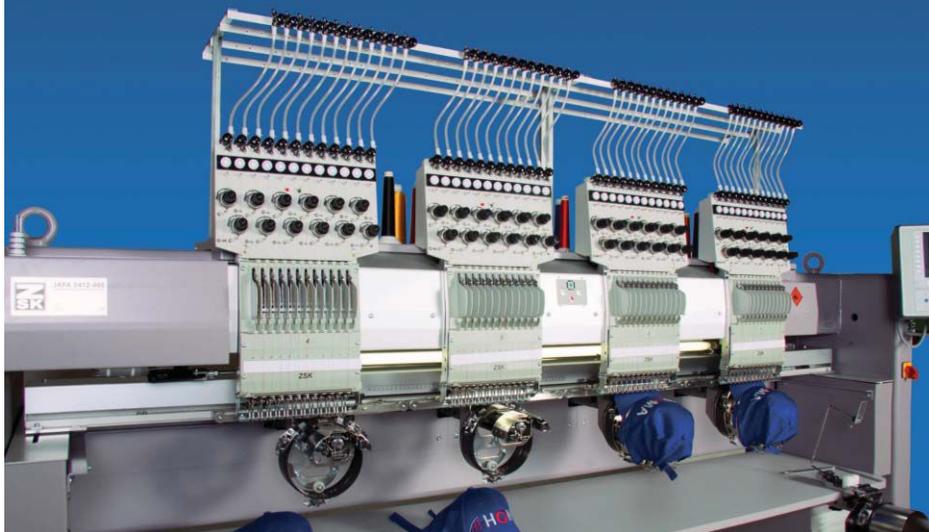
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Joanna Grant, Affinity

Express: For any business, small or large, new or veteran, cash is key. Maintaining a strict

focus on revenue generation is critical to growth. Yes, it can be difficult to do this when a business owner wears many hats. That’s where prioritization comes in: New sales, client retention (your best ones first, of course), accounts receivables and so on. Also, let your assistants pick up tasks that you might otherwise have handled, but no longer have the time for. It’ll empower them and free you up to do more important tasks.



Andy Shuman, Rockland Embroidery Inc. (asi/734150):

In a small business, growth can be tough to navigate. Good task management for the entire team is critical. I like a simple three-step process. Step one: Play to each team member’s strength. If you have an employee who’s stellar on the phone, lock him into a customer service role and count on him to complete the associated tasks. Step two: Based on these strengths and delegated responsibilities, set goals. Sit down as a team and develop a list of prioritized items that need to be accomplished. Make sure these standards are within realistic reach. Step three: Stick to your plan and review frequently. This will keep everyone relatively sane, on-track and working toward the same greater purpose.

Problem Solved



Deborah Jones, My Embroidery Mentor: Make a schedule and stick to it. For example, reserve time in the early morning for reading e-mail and then check it at specific intervals during the day, like lunch and middle of the afternoon. Staying on the computer all day is a huge time-waster. Do any ordering at a specific time of the day, and while you're doing it, review the status of any outstanding orders from suppliers. This sort of routine does wonders to help you feel more organized and in control.



Howard Potter, A&P Master Images (asi/702505): I understand 110% where you're coming from. Right now our company is going to just over \$1 million in sales again and we have 12 employees. Here are some ways I stay on top of running a busy shop:

1. I use tools: Macbook Pro, iPad, iPhone, two clipboards and a schedule book. Write a daily list of what you must get done, and it'll keep you on track and productive.

2. Set timelines for various jobs. That gives your employees goals of where the job should be and when. Also, set up automatic reminders for yourself so that you can check in with your staff. Over time, you'll know how much work your team can handle in a day and whether you can take on rush orders.

3. Pay attention to your shop's ergonomics. For example, if a heat press is 10 feet away, move it a couple of feet closer to reduce how many steps it takes to get there. Every step counts and costs you money, whether you're paying an employee or yourself. Maximize your work space by measuring out where everything fits in your production order and max out what you can fit and produce in a work space.

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INTERACT

Phil Stitch Answers



Got a question for Phil?

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

www.stitches.com for the RN Database link.

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

I am looking for a digital camo print beanie. Please help! - Jason

As I like to say, it's the thrill of the hunt! For a modern twist on classic camo designs, check out Yafa Line Inc. (asi/98760); (818) 704-8888; www.yafaline.com.

com, product N882. Don't hide from all the options from Nissin Cap & Bag (asi/30107); (800) 548-8443; www.nissincap.com; and Macro Industries (asi/68399); (909) 364-8100; www.3cfactory.com.

I'm in search of fitted velour sweatsuits for a bridal party. The bride wants Juicy Couture, but I haven't found any of my ASI suppliers that carry a similar product. Can you help? - Karen

Pamper those bridesmaids with soft velour sweatpants (product 922) and a matching jacket (921) from MVP Sportswear (asi/68324); (877) 904-2801; www.mvpssportswear.com. They'll also be quite comfy sporting products DP410W and DP405W from Horizon-Promote This Logo (asi/61761); (678) 380-6022; [\[promotethislogo.com\]\(http://promotethislogo.com\). Chic fashion and relaxation will prevail when the big day comes!](http://www.</p>
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I had a customer ask me if we could get shoes to print. I've never had someone ask that; are there any shoe suppliers that sell to screen printers? - Jason

Get your foot in the door with Norwood US (asi/74400); (877) 667-9663; www.norwood.com. This supplier specializes in golf-related merchandise, such as the FootJoy Contour MyJoy golf shoe (62031); the Nike Heritage Shoe (62079) and others. For a larger variety of footwear, take a walk to Assertive Creativity (asi/37166); (347) 350-6349; www.assertivecreativity.com. There, you'll find canvas shoes, sneakers, slippers, high heels, sandals and many



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Phil Stitch Answers

more options! Finally, check out products 11484, 75637, 83148 and dozens more from Hammacher Schlemmer (asi/59444); (866) 714-0530; www.hammacher.com.

My customer wants raglan-sleeve sweatshirts for women to wear for the winter. I'm having a hard time finding them. Can you help? - Margaret

You can cozy up to several stylish sweatshirts from Blanks Plus (asi/40642); (213) 629-0006; www.blanksplus.net; such as the eco-hybrid spandex French terry raglan sweatshirt (3MCSF554). Alternative Apparel (asi/34850); (888) 717-3988; wholesale.alternativeapparel.com; carries a women's slouchy pullover (01990E1), and a women's raglan cropped sweatshirt (09820F6). I've got one more great sup-

plier up my sleeve - American Apparel (asi/35297); (213) 488-0226; www.americanapparel.net/wholesaleresources. There, you can find the unisex California fleece raglan (5454) and the tri-blend rib lightweight raglan pullover (BR394).

I need a wholesaler that offers carriers or coolers for beer growlers. I'm looking for insulated or non-insulated soft coolers. Blank would be good for my embroidery business, but I'd also like to find some that I can have sourced out to screen. Thank you. - Brent

Throw back a cold one with Brave USA (asi/41630); (435) 753-8100; www.braveusa.com. This supplier carries the Beer Growler insulated tote (BC1055), a fully insulated cooler that can hold ½-gallon

growler jugs. The Brewski growler beer jug cooler (CC440) is available as well.

You can also keep cool with products 0406, 0638 and more from Numo (asi/74710); (972) 962-5400; www.numomfg.com. These are high-quality neoprene growler covers your customers will love! If those options don't work, consider the multipurpose beverage cooler (404-HT) from Picnic at Ascot Inc. (asi/78060); (310) 676-9268; www.ascotpromotional.com. Constructed of 600D fabric and a lightweight aluminum frame, this collapsible cooler can carry many different combinations of beverages. A removable bottle divider is included.

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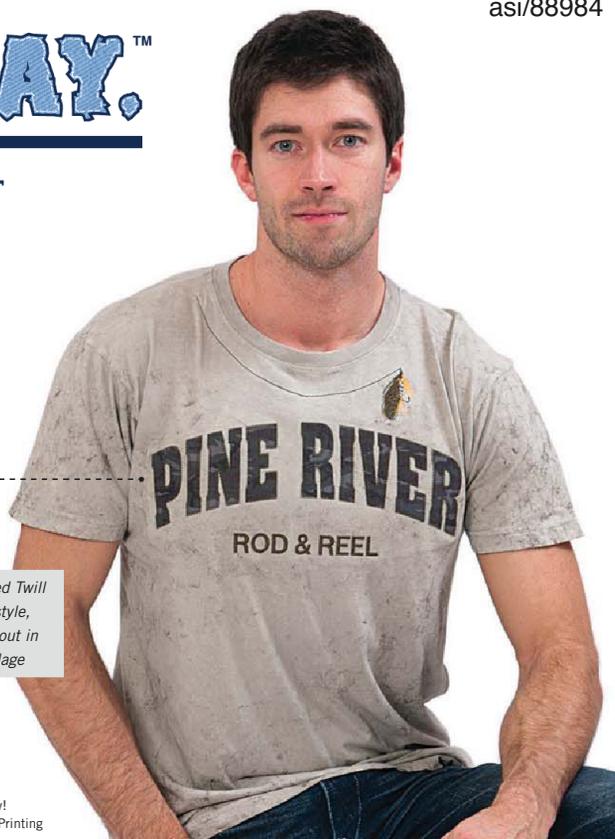
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ST1401

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By Christopher Ruvo

EmbroidMe Announces Expansion Plans

EmbroidMe (asi/384000) is projecting that it'll open 20 new store locations in the greater Tampa area over the next several years, adding up to 200 new jobs to the local economy. Specifically, EmbroidMe – the world's largest franchiser focused of decorated apparel, promotional products and personalized gifts – is adding at least seven new locations to Tampa, four to St. Petersburg and one to Clearwater.

"We see real business growth throughout central Florida," says Erin Crawford, EmbroidMe's vice president of development. "We're based here in Florida, so we know the markets well. Real estate in central Florida has recovered better than it has in other areas and we see more business-to-business opportunities."

The new additions will call for up to five new employees per store, but each location

can grow to have up to 15 employees working on production and sales. According to Crawford, EmbroidMe sees great potential in the ad specialty market going forward. "We've changed our tagline to reflect a more consultative approach and we're heavily invested in stores offering promotional products and additional services," she says.

In addition to central Florida, Crawford says EmbroidMe is looking to expand its presence in south Florida, Salt Lake City, Albuquerque, Colorado, New Hampshire and Boston, as well as Henderson, NV. *Counselor* magazine, *Stitches'* sister publication, ranks EmbroidMe as the 20th largest distributor in the promotional products industry, with 2012 North American ad specialty sales of \$84.9 million, a year-over-year increase of 2.7%.

CustomInk Heads Anti-Bullying Campaign

CustomInk, a "design-online" apparel-decoration company, recently orchestrated an interactive outreach campaign that raised money for an anti-bullying nonprofit. The "Be Good to Each Other" initiative encouraged students and others to stand up for kindness and tolerance by designing and wearing anti-bullying T-shirts. All profits from the CustomInk shirt sales go to PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center, which works across the country to address bullying issues.

Celebrities from the worlds of television, movies, music and sports joined in the campaign. "Custom T-shirts with bullying prevention messages unite students, school groups and communities,"

says CustomInk Co-founder and President Marc Katz. "This campaign gives them the power to take a stand and wear their voice on a T-shirt."

This was the third time that CustomInk ran the Be Good to Each Other campaign. In previous years, the campaign raised more than \$20,000 for bullying prevention programs.

Study: Promo Products Pack Powerful Advertising Punch

The Advertising Specialty Institute, *Stitches'* parent company, has released research that proves the value of imprinted apparel and hard-good promotional products. The latest version of the Global Advertising Specialties Impressions Study shows that, as an ad medium, promo items are more effective than television, magazines and newspa-

pers. Based on thousands of live and online interviews with businesspeople and college students in key cities in the U.S., Canada, Europe and Australia, the results of the study provide apparel decorators and promotional product distributors with powerful data. Some highlights include:

1. People remember.

Owners of ad specialties recall the advertiser 86% of the time. In fact apparel leads the way in advertiser recall.

2. Ad specialties make a great impression. More than half the time (53%), promotional products leave a more favorable impression of the advertiser. This trend was seen across all countries. Outerwear leaves the most positive impression.

For the full report, go to www.asicentral.com/study.

Event Calendar

Feb. 1-6, New York City
New York International Gift Fair
 (800) 272-7469;
www.nynow.com

Feb. 4-6, Dallas ASI Show
 (800) 546-3300;
www.asishow.com

Feb. 15-18, San Francisco
San Francisco International Gift Fair
 (678) 285-3976;
www.sfigf.com

Feb. 16-19, Edmonton, AB
Alberta Gift Show
 (800) 611-6100;
www.albertagiftshow.org

Feb. 18-24, Washington, DC
DC Fashion Week
 (202) 600-9274;
www.dcfashionweek.org

Feb. 23-26, Marlboro, MA
New England Apparel Club Show
 (781) 326-9223;
www.neacshow.com

Feb. 24-28, Boston; Long Island, NY; NJ; Philadelphia; Baltimore
Advantages Roadshow
 (800) 546-3300; www.advantagesroadshow.com

Feb. 25, St. Paul, MN
UMAPP's Fire & Ice Booth Show
 (651) 734-9767;
www.umapp.org

Stitched in Sacred Gold

For more than eight months, 200 men worked diligently in a factory in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, to create a black-dyed, gold-embroidered silk cover to drape over one of Islam's most sacred sites. Ornately adorned with stitched Islamic calligraphy, the beautiful Kiswa serves as a protective covering for the Kaaba, or sacred house, a cube-shaped holy building in Mecca. The embroidered work covered the Kaaba on the 9th of Dul Hijjah, which corresponded to Oct. 14 last year.

The intricate stitching of Islamic calligraphy in gold thread onto silk is a skill that has been passed down through generations. At the Makkah factory, older workers devote countless hours to training young stitchers in the craft. "No one outside this factory knows how to do the embroidery that we do," Hussanian Al-Sharif, head of the factory's embroidery department, told ArabNews.com.

Made of superior-grade silk imported from Italy and Switzerland, the 658-square-meter Kiswa weighs 1,500 pounds. When it's taken down from the Kaaba, the Kiswa is cut into pieces and given to dignitaries and religious groups. The snipped pieces of gold-embroidered sacred art then become cherished heirlooms.



Garment Factory Fire: More Bangladeshis Killed

Renewing worker safety concerns in Bangladesh, a factory fire at the Aswad Knit Composite factory in Sripur, near the capital Dhaka, killed nine people and injured dozens of others late last year. The factory produced fabrics and yarns for different facilities that use garments.

"This latest fire to affect the ready-made garment sector in Bangladesh reflects the sad and shocking truth that not enough is being done to address the safety and health of garment factory workers," Guy Ryder, the International Labour Organization's director-general, said in a statement

released shortly after the blaze.

The Sripur fire came about six months after a Bangladesh factory collapsed, killing more than 1,100 people. Since then, human rights groups have demanded Bangladesh's government, its factory owners and the Western companies that manufacture or source from the Asian country improve working conditions there. In September, thousands of Bangladeshi garment factory workers staged violent protests, aiming to increase their monthly pay. During the protests, about 400 of the country's 5,000 garment factories were forced to close.

Medieval English Embroidery Subject of New Film

A documentary released late last year delves into the past to explore a once noble and distinguished art form nearly lost to time: English embroidery.

Presented by Dan Jones, the BBC4 work *Fabric of Britain: The Wonder of Embroidery* takes viewers back to the Middle Ages when English embroidery was the most coveted in Christendom. While plague contributed to the initial downfall of the industry, and the ravages of time and intentional destruction ruined much of England's embroidered legacy, enough pieces remain to offer a taste of the rich stitching tradition.

Writes Jones, "The English could, and did, embroider pretty much anything: Military outerwear, bedclothes, pillows, bags, purses, wall hangings; all were stitched with intricate images and decorated with precious stones."

Embroidery Program Aims to Help Chinese Women

An embroidery training program powered by a special fund for women was recently launched in Chengdu, the capital of southwest China's Sichuan Province. The program is designed to teach disadvantaged Chinese women professional skills that can help them improve their employment prospects. The program is being jointly organized by the China Women's Development Foundation (CWDF) and Diageo Plc, a global alcoholic beverages group.

SHOP MAKEOVER

Solar-Powered Decoration



MV Sport/Weatherproof (asi/68318) uses these photovoltaic cells to supply 95% of the electricity it needs at its decorating facility.

When it comes to running an eco-friendly operation, MV Sport/Weatherproof (asi/68318) is setting the pace in the apparel-decoration industry. The apparel supplier, which runs a massive in-house embellishment department, recently revolutionized its Bay Shore, NY-based facility, transforming it into a solar-powered operation. Indeed, 95% of MV Sport's electricity needs are provided by the 5,000 photovoltaic cells installed on the roofs of the supplier's two buildings. On a daily basis, these sun-catching

panels help power some 250 embroidery heads, screen-printing machines and other decorating equipment. "We flicked the switch at the end of 2012 and everything has been running smoothly," says company President Josh Peyser.

After extensive research and weighing of the economics, MV Sport/Weatherproof took the leap and invested in the green technology. Peyser says the decision was inspired by an eco-friendly ethos that informs his personal life and business practices. "We're a 65-year-old family business that spends a lot of time thinking about what's the right thing to do," he says. "When the technology reached a point that it was financially viable, we decided to invest."

Through its solar-powered system, MV Sport/Weatherproof generates 1.4 million kilowatt hours of electricity per year. One of the region's largest solar panel installations, the green operation reduces CO2 emissions by 2 million pounds annually. That's the equivalent of recycling 40 million soda cans, planting 150,000 trees or saving 105,000 gallons of gas. "We

generate our power cleanly, minimizing environmental impact and our reliance on foreign power sources," Peyser says.

While payback on the solar investment is estimated to take seven to eight years, MV Sport/Weatherproof recoups some expenses through government incentives and by selling power back to the utility company. "We're also insulated against rising electricity costs," says Peyser, noting the green operation appeals to many clients with similar eco-sensibilities – an appeal that could well spread as customers become even more environmentally conscious. "People want to do business with people they trust and with whom they have shared values."

In addition to being solar-powered, MV Sport/Weatherproof implements a variety of other green initiatives, from using a state-of-the-art screen-printing reclamation system that minimizes water usage to having high-efficiency lighting and instituting company-wide paper, aluminum and plastic bottle recycling efforts. "We're trying," says Peyser, "to do our part."

SALES **Going Green in the U.S.A.**

All USA Clothing is putting a Made-in-America spin on going green. The Sylvan Lake, MI-based apparel provider/decorator has nestled into an eco-niche, selling domestically made, environmentally friendly clothing. The push to feature a green product line began several years ago after All USA – already in the business of selling USA-made clothing – started receiving repeated requests for eco-threads. Nowadays, the earth-conscious collection includes T-shirts, underwear, polos, socks and fleece.

Appealing to entities that range from startup companies to nonprofits with a green ethos, All USA's eco-offerings have helped attract a variety of new customers. The Surfrider Foundation is among them. The California-based nonprofit, which works to pro-

tect oceans and beaches, sought out All USA because it liked that the Michigan company could supply clothes made from things like recycled materials. It was impressed, too, that the apparel would be made in the states, which was itself an environmental benefit since far fewer fossil fuels were burned transporting the clothes.

Since Surfrider became a client, All USA has provided the wave protectors with custom cut-and-sew long-sleeve thermal shirts, organic sweatshirts, T-shirts and more. "We're able to provide them with complete service, from the apparel to the decoration, with minimal environmental footprint," says Emma Zerkel, company president and chief operating officer noting that the green business is steadily growing. "Over the last two years, more customers are following through on buying eco-friendly."



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OPERATIONS

Green Threads

With a 120-year history and distribution centers in 44 countries, American & Efid is one of the world's leading producers of industrial-grade sewing and embroidery threads. Still, A&E aims to be more than just a top manufacturer; it strives to be a global pacesetter in sustainability and corporate responsibility, too. And over the last eight years, the Mount Holly, NC-headquartered company has taken significant strides toward that goal.

Since 2006, A&E shrank its global carbon footprint at its yarn spinning, dyeing and finishing facilities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20%. In the same timeframe, A&E improved worldwide water conservation by 20%. This included saving 388,168 cubic meters of water in India and 332,463 cubic meters in China. "The water conserved by our facilities in India and China is equivalent to the daily water usage of nearly 7 million people within these countries," says John Eapen, vice president of environmental, health and safety/sustainability at A&E.

In Sri Lanka, A&E achieved its goal of "zero waste to landfill," while the company is within a hair's breadth of hitting the same target stateside. Reducing power consumption by 6%, A&E saved 95 million kilowatt hours of electricity over the last seven years – that's equal to what nearly 9,000 American families consume each year. Among other conscientious practices, the company avoids using chemicals and substances that the American Apparel and Footwear Association determines to be harmful to people and the environment.

All the green initiatives are striking a chord with many A&E customers. "More everyday embroiderers want to know that what they buy is being produced in an environmentally and socially responsible way," says Mark Hatton, director of marketing and sales administration. He opines that A&E's sustainable efforts could even be used by embroiderer customers who are courting clients with an eco interest. Says Hatton: "More people want to know the provenance of the products they buy, and if embroiderers are not being asked those questions yet, they will be."

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MARKETING

Forward With Phthalate-Free Prints

In a world of increased consumer consciousness and environmental regulation, Sportco (asi/88792) believes demand for eco-friendly apparel decoration is poised for growth. Eager to be a leader in eco embellishment, the Naperville, IL-based company recently turned its screen-printing department into a phthalate-free operation. "People are starting to look for a greener print," says Eric Withaar, a former Sportco president who now serves as a consultant at the apparel supplier, which boasts in-house decoration that includes embroidery and appliqué. "There's business to be had."

Used as plasticizers in traditional screen-printing ink, phthalates have come under scrutiny for potentially contributing to

serious health problems, including cancer. Keen to offer customers a different option, Sportco started using only phthalate-free inks. The supplier also overhauled its shop, ridding equipment and screens of phthalates. "On the shop floor, we're completely green," Withaar says.

To spread the word about their phthalate-free shop, Sportco launched a marketing campaign that began, appropriately, with the development of an eco-themed logo. Featuring a green globe image and the words "phthalate-free shop," the branding has appeared in e-mail blasts, catalogs, social media and other mediums through which Sportco markets its screen-printing capabilities.

As a result of the green marketing push,

Sportco has landed new clients that include a company that runs online stores for billion-dollar household name brands. In particular, the client elected to use Sportco's decoration services because the phthalate-free inks were a perfect fit for the youth and toddler apparel the client provides through the Web stores. In another instance, Sportco earned embellishment business from Pueri Elemental, a creator of organic children's toys. Sportco prints on the 100% organic, washable plush covers that form part of Pueri's "Eco Bonk," a 3-foot-high inflatable toy that bounces back up when kids play with it. "When people do organic apparel or materials," Withaar says, "they want an eco-friendly print."



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asi/588100

DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Five Steps

By Tonia Kimbrough

Create a Safety Reflective Messenger Bag

Creating a dynamic design sometimes requires layers of a medium. Such was the case with this messenger bag's imprint. Phil Tarcy, VersaCAMM coordinator at Imprintables Warehouse (asi/58475), explains how to use layered, heat-pressed Spectra Color Reflect Heat Transfer Vinyl to create a stylish, reflective accessory.

1

USE A HEAT

PRESS to pre-heat the messenger bag at 305 degrees for four seconds to release moisture and/or wrinkles in the fabric.

2

POSITION YOUR FIRST LAYER OF

Spectra Color Reflect material in a white brick pattern on the front of the bag. Press at 305 degrees for three seconds using medium pressure. Peel the backing off the design while warm.

3

POSITION THE ORANGE

Spectra Color Reflect design of the walker and thought bubble on top of the white bricks. Cover with a Teflon cover sheet and press at 305 degrees for three seconds with a medium pressure; peel warm.

4

PLACE THE WORD "BRAKE!"

on the correct location. Cover with a Teflon cover sheet and press at 305 degrees for three seconds with a medium pressure; peel warm.



Imprintables Warehouse (asi/58475; circle 168 on Free Info Card) or call (800) 347-0068.

5

POSITION

and heat press the black text "Give me a," as shown in the design. Cover with a Teflon cover sheet and press at 305 degrees for five seconds with a medium pressure; peel warm. The imprint will now bounce light back from its source, making the design highly visible at night.

Visit www.imprintables.com to learn more.



DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Decorating & Fabric Trends

Spring Forward to Team-Ready Designs

Now is the perfect time to plan uniform and promotional programs for springtime sports. Cater to teams, schools and recreational leagues with logos you create using a new vector graphics clip-art collection called Stahls' ID CutUps Sports Pack. This new package, designed and offered by Great Dane Graphics, is a great way to save time when you offer heat-applied, cutter-created graphics. This collection offers 150 unique images on a CD that are specially designed to cut and weed easily.

Occupation artwork themes include baseball, basketball, volleyball, football, hockey, soccer and vacation sports. Designs come in CorelDRAW and .eps formats and can be used with a vector graphics program on a Mac or a PC. Open the image, add text, choose a material, and it's ready to cut.

Another option to shave time off your athletic-inspired imprinting comes from Dalco Athletic. Its new RFS Images Permanent-Pressure Twill Appliqué is made of permanent-pressure sensitive twill (PPST). You get the look of a traditional sewn-on, tackle-twill appliqué without the expense or effort. Choose a team or mascot name and pair it with the stock mascot of your



DALCO ATHLETIC; CIRCLE 169 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 288-3252



TRANSFER EXPRESS (ASI/91804); CIRCLE 170 ON FREE INFO CARD) OR CALL (800) 622-2280 TO LEARN MORE.

choice. Just heat and apply, and it's done – no sewing required.

For female leagues and cheer squads you may want to add a bit of sparkle. Capitalizing on the ongoing popular of bling, Transfer Express (asi/91804) recently added a full line of team mascot designs to its collection of stock rhinestone transfers. The new designs are 3" in size and are offered in clear crystal stones. Mascots include an eagle, bulldog, mustang, Viking, panther, Indian, wildcat, Trojan, bear, cardinal, tiger, lion, falcon, yellow jacket and longhorn. Transfers can be used with any screen-printed transfer for a multimedia look and can be adhered to 100% cotton, 100% polyester or cotton/polyester fabrics.



SOS FROM TEXAS; CIRCLE 171 ON FREE INFO CARD OR E-MAIL GO@SOS-FROMTEXAS.COM TO LEARN MORE.

ROLAND DGA; CIRCLE 172 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 542-2307 TO LEARN MORE.

Easy Ways to Be Eco-friendly

Cotton Inc.'s Environment Survey, an annual nationwide study of U.S. consumers, reports, "One-third of consumers say they put effort into finding environmentally-friendly clothing for themselves, up significantly from responses in recent years." In addition 62% of consumers say they actively engage in environmental practices, specifically buying products made from natural fibers.

To keep your operation eco-friendly, seek out green sources of blanks and of imprinting methods/inks. For example, Roland DGA's new VersaCAMM VSi Series of wide-format printers/cutters use eco-solvent inks. Every VSi printer/cutter is equipped to take advantage of Roland's faster-drying GREENGUARD Gold certified Eco-Sol MAX 2 inks in CMYKLLm, high-opacity White, Metallic Silver and Light Black. These wide-gamut, high-density inks allow Roland's VSi Series printer/cutters to deliver vibrant prints with smooth gradations and metallic effects.

Choosing organic apparel would be a good match for an eco-friendly imprint, particularly if the garment or accessory is intended for younger wearers. For example, SOS From Texas' newest offering is a super soft, chemical-free organic cotton baby blanket. In addition, the organic cotton grower and apparel manufacturer offers an organic cotton baby onesie, bib and youth long-sleeve organic crew-neck T-shirt.

Machine & Software Updates

Double-Duty Sewing Machine by bernette



BERNETTE: CIRCLE 183 ON FREE INFO CARD.

Launching its first combination sewing/embroidery machine, bernette, which is marketed and sold by BERNINA, comes out swinging with its bernette Chicago model. Now available at authorized bernette dealerships in the United States, the bernette Chicago offers a semi-automatic built-in needle threader, an automatic one-step buttonhole, more than 150 decorative stitches, and a maximum stitch width of 7mm. When the embroidery module is attached, the bernette Chicago is transformed into an embroidery machine with 100 built-in embroidery stitches and a maximum embroidery area of 4.3" x 6.7". All designs can be rotated or mirrored, and new embroidery designs can be added with a USB stick.

The bernette Chicago also offers 20 quilting stitches, two alphabets and conveniently arranged one-touch buttons, including a start/stop button. It's easy to

use for simple alterations, personalization, embellishments or sewing large projects. Compatible with BERNINA's CutWork Software and cutting accessory, the bernette Chicago gives you the the option of cutting shapes, patterns and designs from multiple layers of fabric.

Additionally, the new bernette Chicago is compact and practical, taking up less storage space in the home and making it convenient for traveling to workshops and classes. The free-arm with built-in slide-on table provides a practical storage space for keeping presser feet and other accessories close at hand. The flip-top lid has a summary of all stitches and stitch patterns inside for a quick selection, and an LED system provides bright illumination of the sewing area around the needle. The built-in scissors at the front are ready to use anytime while sewing. To learn more about the bernette Chicago, visit www.mybernette.com/chicago.

Branded Website Plus Online Designer Free With DecoNetwork

DecoNetwork Pty. Ltd., a global network of apparel decorators, has announced the public launch of DecoNetwork Catalog, a free version of DecoNetwork that provides a branded website, blank product catalogs, online designer and visual product concept creator.

The platform provides decorators such as screen printers, embroiderers and digital garment printers a free website that they can brand with their own colors and logo. The website displays a product catalog of the owner's choice of apparel from major suppliers such as S&S Activewear (asi/84358), SanMar (asi/84863), Broder Bros. Co. (asi/42090), Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788) and others. Consumers are then free to browse the site, select a blank product, and decorate the product with their own logo and designs in a free online designer.

When finished, the DecoNetwork Catalog site will create a visual concept of the product and the consumer's designs, which is e-mailed directly to the site owner. Users can sign-up for free by visiting www.deconetwork.com/catalog.

Hotronix Auto Open Clam Shell

Multitask for maximum productivity with the 16" x 20" Hotronix Auto Open clamshell heat press. One key feature is Perfect Pressure, a digital pressure display function that allows users to accurately set their machines to the exact pressure they

need for every job. This feature has a single-digit LED display that measures the amount of pressure being placed on the item being printed. Once the press is closed, the display will show a number from 1 to 9 representing the strength, 1 being light and 9 being firm pressure.

Another feature is the patented magnetic-assist lock down with automatic release so the top platen pops up when the job is finished. It has digital time and temperature controls, a 3/4" non-stick upper platen, and a wide opening for easy layout.

Visit www.hotronix.com to learn more.

DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Machine & Software Updates

New SureColor DTG Printer Technology

After three years in development, Epson has released its SureColor F2000 Series direct-to-garment printer series, which features the latest advancements in performance imaging. With the ability to print directly onto garments – T-shirts, hoodies, jackets, tote bags and more – ranging from 100% cotton to 50/50 fabric blends, the SureColor F2000 Series offers additional revenue opportunities for garment print shops of any size.

The SureColor F2000 Series printers leverage Epson UltraChrome DG ink technology – an all-new garment ink formulation developed for the Epson MicroPiezo TFP print head to delivering precise and repeatable performance and



STAHL'S
ID DIRECT
(ASI/88984;
CIRCLE 176 ON
FREE INFO CARD)

high-quality images. The Epson SureColor F2000 Standard Edition is a high-speed, CMYK-only model and the Epson SureColor F2000 White Edition offers the added benefit of white ink for printing on dark or color fabrics. The Garment Creator Software for Mac and Windows is included and gives users control over their print workflow and the ability to estimate costs in managing and producing prints. The printer is available through Stahls' ID Direct (asi/88984); visit www.stahlsid.com.

Advanced Conveyor Dryer With Small Footprint

The introduction of a new Compact Gas Conveyor Dryer by Workhorse proves that you don't need a large production space to boost productivity. The MD8, which is fueled by Interchange Equipment, is a compact, powerful dryer designed to cure a wide range of printed substrates. It offers the advanced features of larger dryers in a smaller footprint and at a competitive price.

The patented Air Deflector recycling system, which recirculates air through the heat chamber, has high-velocity jet nozzles for optimum air distribution. This feature is typically found only on larger, more expensive dryers.

The standard oven size is eight feet, and it's powered by a 250,000 BTU stainless-steel burner. The filter drawer slides in and out and it has side-access for easy cleanout. An enlarged heat plenum maximizes the air velocity. It has easy-access controls, a high-temp self-tracking belt and is ETL and CE approved.



WORKHORSE PRODUCTS; CIRCLE 177 ON FREE INFO CARD OR
E-MAIL SALES@WORKHORSEPRODUCTS.COM.

Tajima Standard Six-Head Combines Speed With Ease

Hirsch International (asi/14982) offers one of Tajima's most popular embroidery machine models: TFMX-IIC 1506-436. Known for its many production features that make it easy to use, this commercial production machine has 15 needles with a needle bar stroke that has been increased from 45mm to 47mm for smoother operation and more precise sewing on thicker fabrics. To increase production, network the machine with other Tajima units via a LAN connection as well as through bar-coding, or use the traditional USB or floppy capabilities to load designs to the machine.

Like all Tajima machines the TFMX-IIC1506/436 has a large range of practical options that make the machine even more versatile. Some of these include a sequin attachment, a cylinder attachment and a border frame. There are semi-wide and baby-cap frames as well as many other options. Additional benefits include a thin film transistor LCD MicroSmart screen that shows the design and location of the needle at any point in the sewing process. The frame drive yields a more precise stitch length and the AC servo pulse motor is closed, which minimizes contamination and creates more accurate stitching.



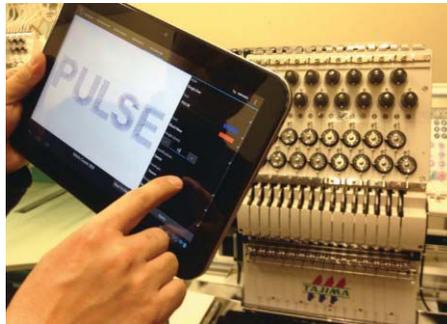
HIRSCH INTERNATIONAL (ASI/14982; CIRCLE
178 ON FREE INFO CARD) OR CALL (800)
394-4426 TO LEARN MORE.

Boost Productivity With Sidekick Software By Pulse

The latest innovation from Pulse allows Tajima users to control their embroidery machines via a remote control. The software, called Sidekick, is a tablet-based solution that enables you to create text, set up designs and manage machines directly from an Android tablet.

Design and embroidery management become quick and easy tasks. "Sidekick is a portable and convenient solution to help manage embroidery businesses. It adds significant functionality, letting users do more with their Tajima machine," says Ed Levy, director of software technologies at Hirsch International (asi/14982).

Not only can you customize text with ease, but you can save time and increase



HIRSCH INTERNATIONAL (ASI/14982; CIRCLE 178 ON FREE INFO CARD) OR CALL (800) 394-4426 TO LEARN MORE.

productivity by setting up designs in advance. Sidekick reduces machine downtime by allocating colors to the design. Then you can prepare the next set of designs while your machine is still running. In addition, Sidekick allows you to remotely check the status of any machine on your network. View up-to-date design status, complete with a preview of the design being sewn in real time. Machine status and stop notifications also are displayed on the Sidekick. For information visit www.bic.us.

✔ Product Pick Brighten Spiritwear With Bubbles Appliqué Fabric



DALCO ATHLETIC; CIRCLE 169 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 288-3252

A new appliqué material called Bubbles from Dalco Athletic boosts the fun factor for spiritwear, cheerleading uniforms and women's sportswear. The pattern features random "floating" circles and dots in monochromatic colors, which include black, gold, kelly, maroon, orange, pink, purple, red and royal.

The 100% cotton fabric is ideal for cutting appliqué lettering, backed by a heat-seal adhesive, making it easy to tack in place before sewing. This new material comes in rolls, precut in any stock shape or letter, or custom cut to your specifications. It's available in one-yard increments or in a 50-yard roll.

Quick Tips

1

Make the most of your mesh.

Graphic Solutions Group now offers a free *Screen Printing Mesh Selection* video taught by expert Chuck Maulsby. You'll learn usage

tips for different types of mesh and the importance of matching the mesh count to your artwork. Visit www.GOGSG.com.



GRAPHICS SOLUTIONS GROUP; CIRCLE 181 ON FREE INFO CARD.

2

Achieve perfect alignment for greater productivity.

The new Kiss Cut Distressed Appliqué from Stahls' ID Direct (asi/88984) arrives pre-aligned in a single piece with foreground

tacked, or "kissed," to the background with a pressure-sensitive adhesive - just position and sew. For more information, visit www.stahls.com/any-word-any-way.



STAHL'S ID DIRECT (ASI/88984; CIRCLE 176 ON FREE INFO CARD.)

3

Eliminate the scratchy feel of stitching next to the skin.

Cotswold No-Show Nylon Mesh stabilizer can be used to cover irritating stitches on

a garment's interior. It's designed to be used with light-colored fabrics and works well with microfiber performance wear. For more information, visit www.cotswoldindustries.com.



COTSWOLD INDUSTRIES; CIRCLE 180 ON FREE INFO CARD.

DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Design, Decorating & Digitizing

By Bonnie Landsberger

Punching Sense: Freestanding Lace Basics

Embroidered freestanding lace (FSL) is an eye-catching technique whose success depends on the digitizing. If you follow a few basic rules, you can create decorative trims on apparel, as well as other items, such as jewelry, key chains, baskets and bookmarks. The stitch count is generally low, so machine time is fast, making it fun for you to experiment. After your first sew-out of a correctly digitized FSL design, you'll likely be encouraged to try adding even more details in the next. So, let's take a look at those FSL rules by completing two basic shapes.

1

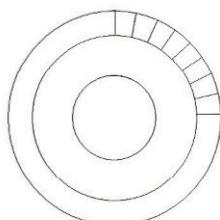
PREPARE THE ARTWORK USING SIMPLE LINES.

Even when your design for FSL is large and contains many elements, the artwork doesn't need to be complex because you're working with geometrical shapes that can be adjusted in your digitizing software by referring to the grid. The objective is to create a skeleton that you'll build upon and enhance using your digitizing tools. Don't draw elements that you'll duplicate, such as the lines seen at the upper right of the ornament that we plan to use as placements for satin columns.

2

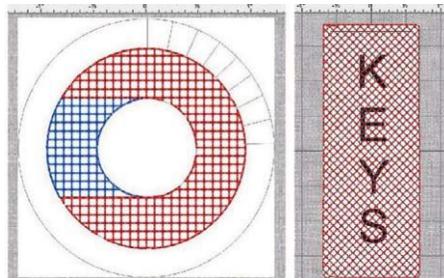
PUNCH THE MAIN FOUNDATION.

Set down a crosshatch grid of stitches for the main base of the remaining elements. Section odd shapes into more than one object, connecting the edges below your satin columns. Pattern fills that sew both crosshatched lines in one section, as illustrated, are not as secure as manually sectioning and digitizing two layers of normal fill. Set your density at about 1.5mm to 2mm and angle layers in opposite directions. Path sections so the edge stitches are secured under your columns and travel to each section under those columns. For a thicker appearance in a larger design, you can enhance your results by repeating the crosshatch fill.



▲ 1. This artwork was created in graphics software for a hanging ornament and a key chain.

K
E
Y
S



▲ 2. The doughnut shape of the fill element (left) was manually sectioned into two objects with a 0 degree special pattern crosshatch fill, leaving the top and bottom edges of the vertical stitches insecure. The angle of the one section of crosshatch fill for the key chain (right) was set at 45 degrees.

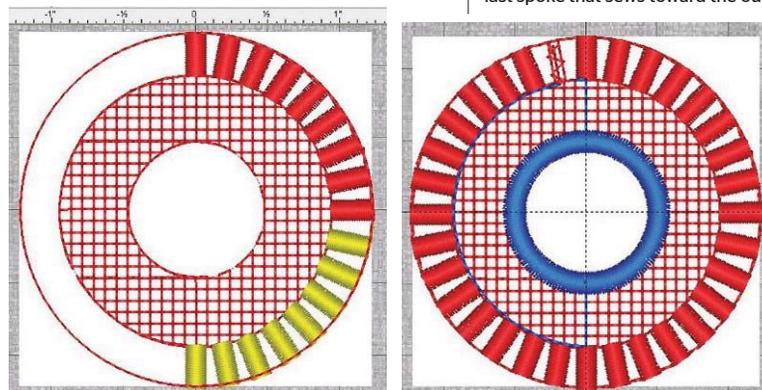
3

PUNCH IN A LOGICAL, UNBROKEN PATH.

Move through the design following a path that doesn't require jump stitches. To keep your design from unraveling, never allow a break in the thread. Find ways of traveling by sewing over previous lines if necessary.

Satin columns require ample underlay equal to an edge walk and a zigzag, depending on the column width. For the satin-stitch "spokes," we punched three lines of manual underlay, then the column, and then traveled to the next spoke along the outside of the design. This line of connecting travel stitches offers additional support under the satin stitches for the border.

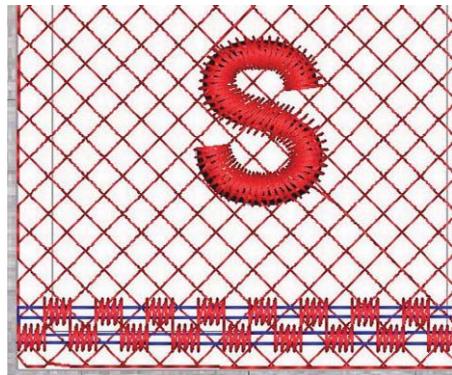
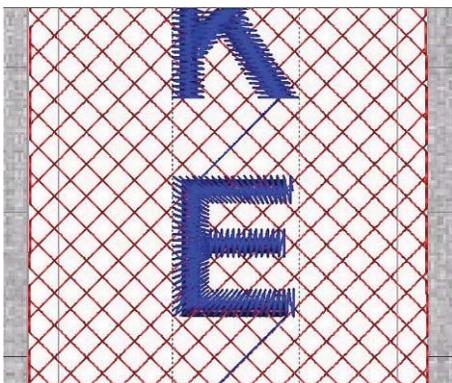
▼ 3. The image shows how the spoke-like elements were digitized for one quarter of the circle (red), and then duplicated for the lower quarter (yellow). This image shows how, after completing all but one spoke, we traveled first to the center to complete the inside column. The two inside columns are completed first, ending where the machine can then move to that one last spoke that sews toward the outside of the design.



4

PUNCH ENOUGH SUPPORT AND ELIMINATE SHORT STITCHES.

For the key chain, we traveled to each letter along one of the crosshatch-fill lines. We used a block font with a density set at 4.2, applying an edge walk and zigzag underlay. Be sure the automatic lock stitch setting in your keyboard lettering is off; too many stitch penetrations in one spot with only the crosshatch for support could lead to thread breaks. Lock stitches should only be necessary at the very end of the design and set into a satin stitch when possible.

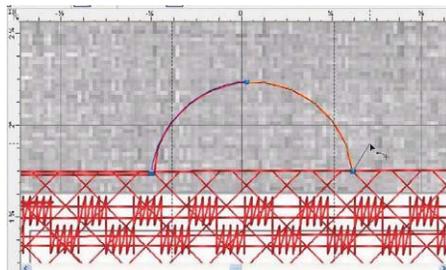


▲ 4. Letters were created one at a time using keyboard lettering; guidelines revealed that the letters should be moved slightly to the left.

5

CREATE THE HANGING LOOP AND BORDER.

Travel to the top and punch a half-circle of one or two lines of run stitches for the initial support. Then use a satin stitch column for the loop and, because you'll need extra support needed here, use an edge walk and zigzag underlay.



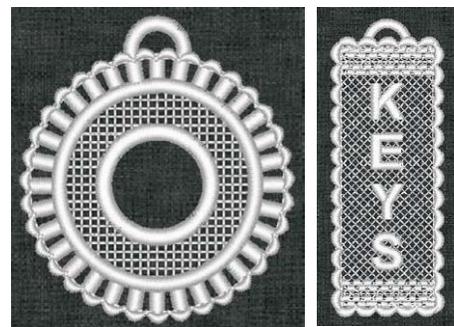
▲ 5. The ruler and guidelines were used to be sure the 1/4" high hanging loop is centered.



▲ A line of run stitches (blue line) is set in just to the inside edge of the crosshatch fill. We've chosen a scalloped pattern satin stitch for the borders of both designs. Because the tips at the inside of the scallops have very little to latch on to, we've added a line of run stitch, giving the tips something to grab.

6

STITCH AND RINSE. Sew the design on a heavy, sturdy, water-soluble stabilizer. Depending on the brand or type, you may need to use multiple layers. Soak the finished design in warm water for a minute or two and then rinse. For a stiffer design, don't rinse away all of the stabilizer.



▲ 6. Simulation views show the finished designs are ready to stitch.



Final

You can decorate your finished designs with beads and ribbons or attach a key ring.

BONNIE LANDSBERGER is owner of Cannon Falls, MN-based Moonlight Design Ltd. Contact: moonltda@aol.com.

DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Design, Decorating & Digitizing

By Terry Keeven



PHOTO COURTESY OF TERRY KEEVEN

Screen-Printing Success: Going the Contract Route

Your embroidery business is booming, and more and more of your customers are asking if you can also fulfill their screen-printing orders. While you don't currently offer screen printing, you see the potential to drastically increase your sales volume by adding it as a service. How do you handle this business dilemma? You have three options:

- 1. YOU CAN TELL YOUR CLIENTS** that you don't offer screen printing and then lose out on what could potentially be a very excellent new revenue stream for your business.
- 2. YOU CAN FIND A SCREEN PRINTER** who works on a wholesale basis and contract the printing jobs out.
- 3. YOU COULD BRING** screen printing in-house.

Rule of thumb

If you're being presented with screen-printing orders four or more times a month, consider options two or three. You're just leaving too much money on the table to consider option one.

After determining that you can no longer leave this portion of your business for your competitors, it's time to consider your other two options.

In this column, let's look at finding a contract printer. This isn't as easy as looking in the phone book or typing "screen printer" into your Google search. Here are a few things to consider before deciding who you're going to let

print your customers' next order:

- 1. DOES THE SCREEN PRINTER SELL DIRECT**, as well as to the promotional products industry? Be sure that you aren't contracting your orders to a local screen printer if he's also selling to the same pool of clients that you are. The potential for that company stealing your accounts away is too great, and it does happen.
- 2. WHAT ARE THE PRINTER'S TURN-AROUND TIMES?** If you've been offering your clients four-to-seven-day turns on their orders, but your screen printer offers 10 to 15 days, this may cause an issue.
- 3. WHAT DOES THE PRINTER CONSIDER QUALITY WORK?** Screen printing is an art (not a science) and beauty really is in the eye of the beholder. The quality of screen-printing work varies widely, so ask for samples to ensure that your printer's idea of quality meets or exceeds yours.

- 4. DOES THE PRINTER HAVE AN IN-HOUSE ART DEPARTMENT?** This is critical because if you're used to getting a sketch from your customer and you don't know how to work in a vector-based program such as CorelDRAW or Adobe Illustrator, the screen printer you choose will need to have an art/creative department. Most contract printers require you to submit vector art, so a sketch would most likely not be sufficient. Contracting out your screen printing is a very good option for most businesses, as long as you can find the right company to meet or exceed your expectations. Remember, all of the work a contract printer does is a reflection of your firm, so you must be thorough when seeking out the perfect complement to your business.

SCREEN-PRINTING TIP:

To create a design like the one shown here, be sure your contract shop is using a quality press. Make sure the operator has the right time, temperature and pressure settings for the job. You could even ask your shirt vendor to give you recommended settings. Make sure your vendor has quality equipment to get the job done; if the press isn't calibrated properly, there will be problems with the output.

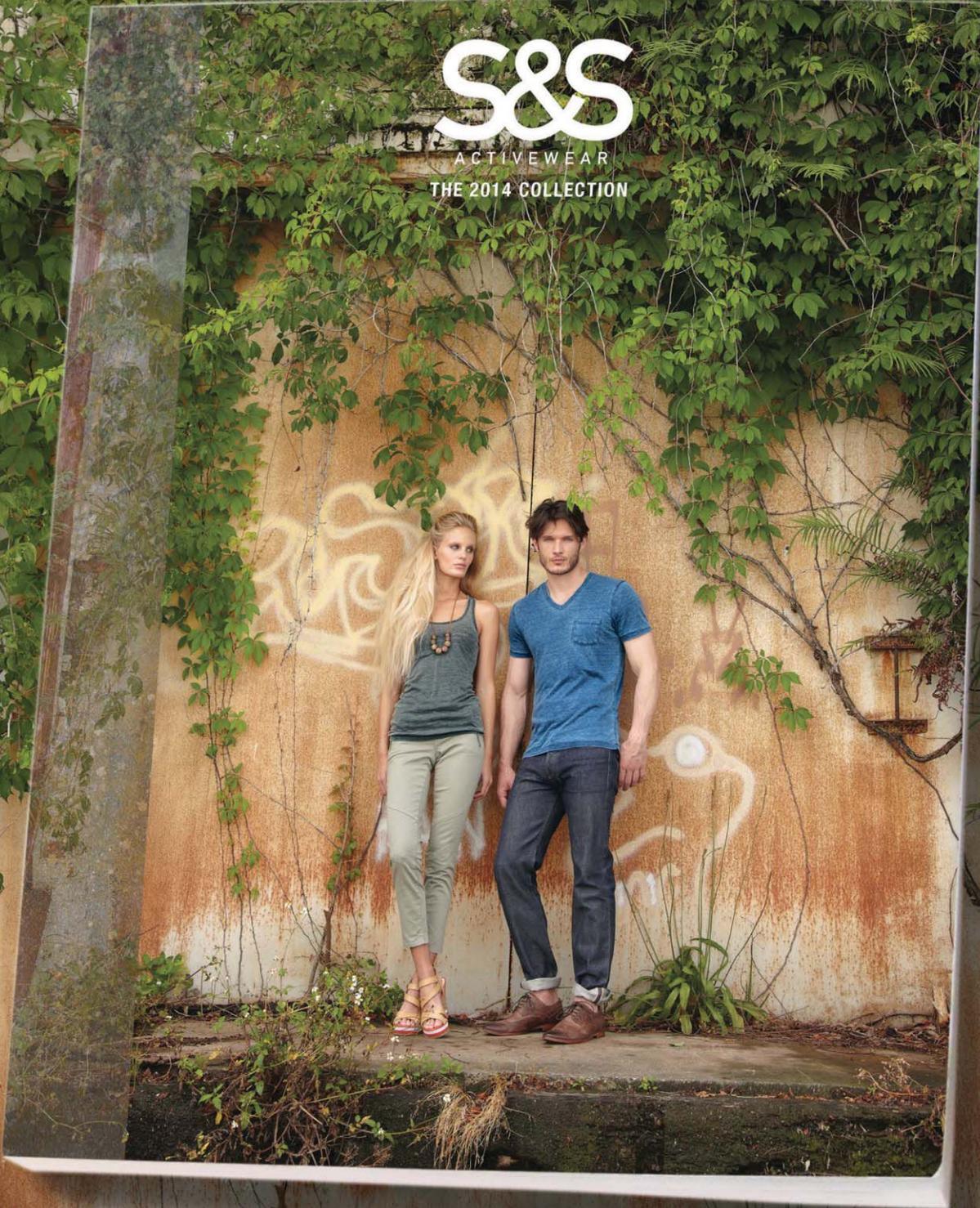
NEXT ISSUE

The ins and outs of bringing screen printing in-house.

TERRY KEEVEN is owner of St. Louis-based St. Louis Print Co., which specializes in contract screen printing. Contact: terry@stlprintco.com.

S&S

ACTIVEWEAR
THE 2014 COLLECTION



THE 2014 COLLECTION.

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If it's hot, it's here.

LOOK BOOK

Runway

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

New York Fashion Week

New York Fashion Week for spring 2014 showcased a resurgence of gorgeous embroideries and embellishment, textile manipulation and patterns. *Stitches* visited the runway to scope out several fashion collections that stood out for their stunning embroidery designs this season.

MARK BADGLEY/JAMES MISCHKA



For their spring collection, design duo Badgley and Mischka took their inspiration from Jacques Henri Lartigue's photography of the elegant women who graced the French Riviera in the 1920s and 1930s. Vintage silhouettes and breezy, textured silk and chiffon gowns echoed the era's seaside glamour.

The dresses were ornately embellished with vintage motifs, enhanced by classic ribbon-embroidery with set Swarovski crystals. In addition, the designers' tonal embroideries corresponded to the fabric textures, creating an elegant feel. One such look employed opal-finish crystals, which reflected the surrounding fabric shades, on a bodice that perfectly complemented the dress' sea-foam silk. The duo's choice to embroider the crystals onto a nude fabric really made them pop against the dress. Finally, the eveningwear portion featured a bold palette of lilac, ice blue, coral and red.

TIP: You can create an ornate, luxe effect when you combine dimensional fabric elements and stones. Mixing the sizes and shapes of the crystals emphasizes a hand-embroidered effect, and are further highlighted when accented by ribbon and fabric appliqués.

MONIQUE LHUILLIER



A red-carpet favorite, Lhuillier creates apparel for her lifestyle, like detachable beaded collars to make her garments more versatile. Similarly, her spring 2014 collection is light and elegant, offering a sweet palette of tangerine, raspberry, peach and ombre shades like vanilla blending into chocolate. Lhuillier's approach to embroideries has long been delicate and fabric-focused. In the past few seasons, she has excelled in fabric manipulation, instead of relying on big beads or jewels, in her bridal and ready-to-wear collections.

This season, there were two embroidered looks that stood out. The first was a sheath with dimensionally cut flowers that were appliquéd onto sheer organza. Because of the bright colors, this worked as a day-into-evening look. The combination of flat and loosely attached flowers added more texture to the dress, and the intensity of the color against a neutral base made the simple blooms stand out. The second was a dress with embroidered vines accented with raw-edged organza flower petals. For a budget-minded embroidery designer, this embellishment is great for creating a luxurious look for less.

TIP: Two budget-friendly embellishment ideas: Raw-edged chiffon petals are easy and inexpensive, but achieve a beautiful organic look. Continuous sequins are also a simple and affordable technique for most embroidery studios.

TADASHI SHOJI



Shoji is a designer beloved by celebrities and women around the world. He's famous for creating dresses that flatter all types of figures, from Dita Von Teese to Octavia Spencer. His spring runway was full of beautiful silhouettes in a cool palette of pastels like frosty blue, pale lilac and white. The collection ranged from sheer plaid and lace gowns to a series of metallic sequin-and-embroidery sheath dresses – Shoji created a night skyline of embellished bodices and necklines by utilizing straight rows of sequins in differing sizes.

Shoji also cleverly reversed this motif into a carwash-fringe hem by using strips of crystals and metallic ring sequins stitched onto organza. The reflection of the materials embroidered onto sheer fabric strips helped emphasize movement when the models walked.

TIP: Two budget-friendly embellishment ideas: Using similar colors but different shapes and sizes is an easy way to make embellishments look rich. Using a graded effect on a neckline or hem is also a cost-saving measure when you don't need to embroider the entire garment.

LOOK BOOK

Runway

NAEEM KHAN



Khan always presents one of the most regal runways at New York Fashion Week. For spring, he took his inspiration from Latin and Spanish culture: Romantic touches from Mexico came in the form of peasant blouses and models with hair styled in tribute to Frida Kahlo. Romantic Spanish motifs were most visible in the beautiful floral embroidery. There were several gowns with lush red roses embroidered with thick, traditional threadwork. More glamorous gowns echoed the threadwork flowers, but used layered sequins and beading to create sparkle.

Khan also paid homage to ancient Aztec costuming with heavily embroidered taffeta looks. Ornate metallic beads and shredded chiffon fringe gave the illusion of fur and tribal ornamentation. The overall effect was rich yet light to keep it appropriate for spring. Khan's use of embroidery shows how a designer can take inspiration from simple ethnic motifs and elevate them to haute couture.

TIP: Beads and sequins hold up well on sheer fabrics like tulle and chiffon, and the mix of shine and embellishment on transparent fabrics has a sexy, luxe effect.

Trends

By Alissa Tallman

APPAREL

Black/ White Contrast Panels

There's no doubt about it: Black and white are a dynamic duo. Featured in countless geometric patterns this season, this highly saturated combo makes any outfit stand out. Fashionistas from Gareth Pugh to Derek Lam gave black-and-white contrasting top billing in their 2013/2014 collections, leaning heavily on the traditional appeal of both neutrals while introducing unique, innovative designs at the same time.

This trend is ideal for a wide range of promotional opportunities; consider implementing it via tops and bottoms as well as through accessories and embellishments. "Black and white contrasting pieces and panels presents a chance to combine the two most easy-to-wear, best-selling colors," says Michael Ardelean, merchandiser for Alternative Apparel (asi/34850). "It's always great to see the market come back to the classics."



Alternative Apparel (asi/34850; circle 154 on Free Info Card) distributes this sporty black and white-striped racer tank (O1927EJ).



G P Marketing Intl. Ltd. (asi/55600; circle 153 on Free Info Card) carries this mod-looking silicone watch (GK-139) for a great add-on.



This short-sleeve top (2020) is available from Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788; circle 167 on Free Info Card).



PHOTO: GAMMARAPHO

This spectacular outfit from Derek Lam, which put black-and-white panels in contrast on display through angled color blocking, was showcased during New York Fashion Week. This color combo looks particularly amazing when paired with other neutrals, such as earthy browns.

LOOK BOOK

Trends

COLOR

Electric Blue

Dazzling and crisp, electric blue has emerged as a leading apparel hue for the winter-into-spring season. You'll find it bedecking both men's and women's items, such as dresses, ties, jackets and belts. "Electric blue is proving extremely popular because it's a fresh take on your basic blue," says Christine Hadvick, marketing and public relations representative for Stormtech Performance Apparel Ltd. (asi/89864). "In the corporate marketplace, companies are stepping up into bolder colors because they can assist with elevating a branding identity."

Hadvick points to electric blue's visual brilliance and strongly recommends it for any type of promotional situation. "People are stimulated by visuals, so whether you're a salesperson making a call, closing a deal or taking part in some great big marketing program that has multiple advertising channels, you want to focus on how to best get the customer's attention," she says.



Stormtech Performance Apparel Ltd. (asi/89864; circle 155 on Free Info Card) distributes this beautiful down-filled jacket (DSW-2W).



PHOTO: CAT WALKING

Chloe unveiled this gorgeous electric-blue cape at Paris Fashion Week. This cool hue makes a huge impact either on its own or when matched with various saturated brights.

The Corporate Marketplace Inc. (asi/46743; circle 156 on Free Info Card) carries this striking men's watch (MSW741) in a black and electric-blue combo.



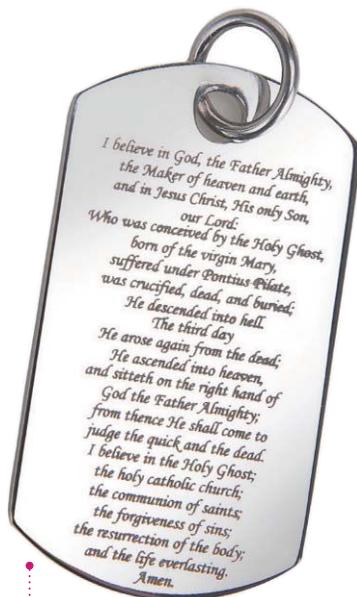
This electric-blue camouflage tee (60173) is available from Rothco (asi/83708; circle 157 on Free Info Card).

EMBELLISHMENT

Text

Words, words, words: When you use text as printed or painted embellishment on apparel or accessories, it does double duty as art and as a message to be read by viewers. “Words on apparel will always be in,” says Lee Romano Sequeira, co-owner of Sparkle Plenty Designs Inc. (asi/88442). “It’s a fantastic conversation starter. People will usually ask about what they see on a tee, and you may find yourself grabbing a new customer in the process.”

Lori Torman, CEO of Sticky Jewelry Inc. (asi/89811), weighs in on the assets of text-heavy jewelry, especially dog tags, which are roomy enough to feature a considerable amount of text. “Dog tag pendants are perfect for organizations seeking to engrave a lengthy mission statement, message or popular quote,” she says. “It’s even common to engrave a word-heavy message on one side and a logo on the other.” Torman suggests laser engraving as the best choice for such pieces. “If customers want a word-heavy message, they’ll typically choose laser engraving versus a traditional etched engraving. Since laser engraving is more precise, characters can be darker and smaller but still very easy to read.”



Sticky Jewelry Inc. (asi/89811; circle 160 on Free Info Card) distributes this dog tag (AX2005) with The Apostles' Creed inscribed on the front.

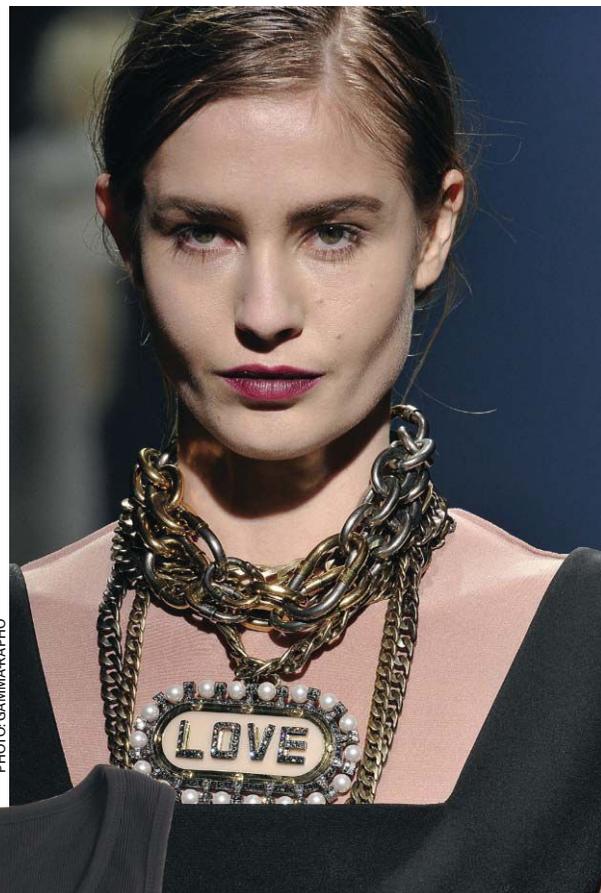


PHOTO: GAMMA-RAPHO

Lanvin was one of many high-end fashion houses to incorporate text-heavy accessories into its lineup. This killer necklace, which debuted during Paris Fashion Week, inspired dozens of retail stores to create their own versions.



Sparkle Plenty Designs Inc. (asi/88442; circle 158 on Free Info Card) carries this splendid sparkly embellished tee (product number needed).

LOOK BOOK

Showcase: Totes and Handbags

This season includes a deliciously diverse range of new styles for totes and handbags.

Monica Mikhaeil, graphic designer and photographer for McKlein Co. LLC (asi/70053), emphasizes totes in particular as one of the season's hottest bag styles. "Totes never go out of fashion," she says. "A few years ago, busy women relied on a single, large go-to bag.

Today, they rotate between several options to reflect their mood and setting." She adds that current tote trends feature bold colors as well as pronounced patterns. "Women use their bag of choice to make a statement, with lively patterns and brightly contrasting color combinations." Finally, Mikhaeil nods to texture and embellishment: "The popularity of texture is no surprise," she says. "Expect to see quilting, appliqué and a shift toward fabric and leather pairings."

Amye Kurson, founder of Ame & Lulu (asi/35232), also stresses pattern and color. "A collection should be streamlined and functional, yet have personality," she says. "Structured, classic bags with clean lines and vibrant colors are where it's at right now." She points out that such designs are enlivening the promotional arena. "It's nice to bring unique, colorful products to the promotional industry, something end-users can identify with and be proud to use."



Ame & Lulu (asi/35232; circle 162 on Free Info Card) distributes this eye-catching and roomy tote (EX-060).



Alfa Instruments Mfg. Co. (asi/34042; circle 161 on Free Info Card) carries this color-blocked tote (E42-ATOT-CS).



This handbag from Castle Merchandising (asi/44315; circle 164 on Free Info Card) features metal-stud embellishments and a choice of handles or an arm strap.



This stylish army-green messenger bag (SA3-OLIVE) is available from LBD Promos (asi/67735; circle 163 on Free Info Card).

LBU Inc. (asi/65952; circle 159 on Free Info Card) distributes this snazzy sublimated messenger bag (SB-22125-KIT).



McKlein Co. LLC (asi/70053; circle 165 on Free Info Card) carries this beautiful faux leather handbag (11085).

KOMET CREATIONS

Komet Creations is home to many embroidery friendly products. Our original Lovie™ Baby Security Blanket has been an America favorite since 1991. Our products are made with regard to high quality and safety, while providing terrific value to both retailers and consumers. Komet Creations makes ordering easy with the ability to mix and match products to meet our low minimum order.



Lovie™

Lovie Babies™

LOVIE

All sixteen Original Lovie™ come gift boxed, are made of soft huggable fleece fabric, and have satin trim accents that are perfect to embroider on. Lovie™ blankets have been selected as "one of 10 Best Toys" by Dr. Stevanne Auerbach.

LOVIE Babies

Lovie Babies™ are a smaller version of our Original Lovie™, with the same attention to detail and quality. They come unboxed and are open at the bottom.



Personalizeable Pals

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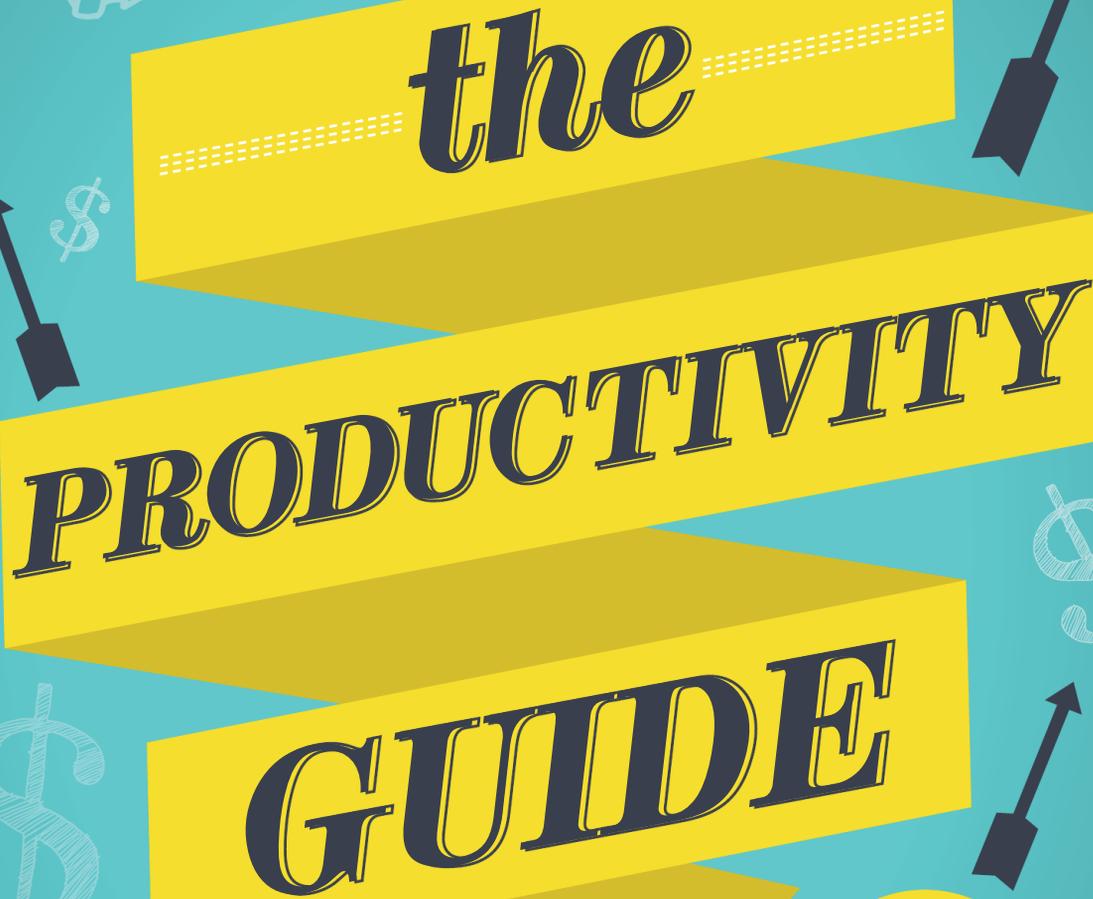
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Mention you saw us in *Stitches Magazine* and you will receive **10% off** of your order by February 28th.

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the
PRODUCTIVITY
GUIDE

2014

You'll learn super strategies for streamlining your order management, setting up your shop for optimal workflow, setting a price list for profit and more. Plus, industry experts will weigh in on how to make any size shop ramp up efficiency overnight.

by
BETSY CUMMINGS

An entrepreneur looking to expand his earnings thought he'd run a company from afar. What he thought was a good idea was quite the opposite. It didn't take long for the Maryland-based executive to lose control of his New York-based decorating shop. By the time Joyce Jagger, The Embroidery Coach, showed up, the decorating shop was all but folding in on itself. Because the owner worked offsite, he only visited the company's offices occasionally. "Orders weren't being processed on time, deliveries were late, there were too many mistakes and customers were unhappy," Jagger says.

After just a few hours as an observer in the facility, Jagger notes, the problems were obvious. "There were no checks and balances, and they'd discontinued the system in place ... because they thought those systems took up too much time." Previously, those systems had worked seamlessly. That was just for starters. No employees were cross-trained, production managers spent too much time performing tasks meant for workers, and Jagger noticed a handful of crew idly chatting on the phone or entrenched in Facebook. What's more, "the office manager couldn't get the production manager to cooperate with her," Jagger says.

For Jagger, an Ithaca, NY-based industry expert and embroidery business consultant, who once owned the company in question, it was too much to simply let it go. She agreed to act as a part-time consultant/employee to turn the firm around. Through a series of systems, checks and standardized processes, Jagger has been able to bring the company to a point where they're seeing black again. But its potential demise is one of the casualties decorators can face if they don't streamline their processes to run more efficiently.

To help decorators avoid a similar fate, we scoured the industry for some of the

best tips and practices on how to become more productive and efficient. Read on to find out how to give your company a business tune-up.

TIME IT OUT

Nothing kills a company faster than lost time. That holds especially true for decorators whose bottom line relies on running jobs efficiently, experts say. To start, decorators should look for tasks and areas of the company that are time wasters. "I teach my students to keep track of their time from the time they're waiting on the customer until that job goes out the door," Jagger says.

\$150 each, it may seem costly, but Atkinson says the minutes saved every hour and day by allowing each station to have its own cart pays for itself almost instantly and boosts the bottom line by increasing production each hour. In fact, it's often small fixes like this that can buy decorators hours of time each day. Want workers really efficient with tools always at the ready? Jagger suggests that machine workers and others wear aprons with plentiful pockets so they always have their tools with them. Likewise, inventory, such as blanks needed for a particular job, should be located next to work stations, not across the floor.

"WE HAVE A SOFTWARE SYSTEM THAT DOESN'T ALLOW US TO PUT AN ORDER INTO PRODUCTION UNTIL ALL THE BLANKS ARE FILLED IN."

ANDY SHUMAN, ROCKLAND EMBROIDERY (ASI/734150)

One sure way to waste time is to make staff hunt for tools that should always be at the ready. "Make it easier for people to do their jobs," says Marshall Atkinson, COO of Milwaukee-based Visual Impressions (asi/743500). Inventory, for example, should be next to work stations and not across the shop. "If you have a crew of people always fighting over a tape gun, you're penny-wise and dollar-foolish," Atkinson says. "Spend \$9 and buy another tape gun." In fact, Atkinson says, he makes it a daily practice to walk his shop floor asking workers what tools they could use to save time and more efficiently perform their jobs.

Recently, an employee said an extra cart would be helpful for storage. "We didn't have enough and they were fighting over the carts," he says. Atkinson bought six carts, one for each work station. And at

Jagger also suggests that shop floor managers can regain minutes by examining the design of large-stitch orders (those above 100,000, for example) and seeing where they can cut time by, say, reducing unnecessary trims, Jagger adds.

ABO (ALWAYS BE ORGANIZING)

"Whenever you work through a bottleneck to create a smoother workflow, you're going to create a bottleneck downstream," says Rob Dubow, CEO of Dubow Textile (asi/700107), a decorator in St. Cloud, MN. "And bottlenecks occur daily," he says. But there are steps companies can take to minimize their occurrence. Dry runs are key, Dubow adds – so key that his company often maps out two flowchart versions of a particular product, theoretically running it through the company's system twice to see where potential road-



blocks might occur, before actual production ever begins.

To keep production flowing and flexibility a constant state of mind, managers at Team Mates Inc. (asi/90674), “meet frequently, often several times a day to discuss rush orders and overall production,” says Mike Little, president of the Eagan, MN-based company. And for good reason: “A workflow plan won’t work unless everyone is aware of the plan and follows it.”

To make that plan concrete, Jagger suggests decorators make a blueprint of their production space. That gives managers a bird’s eye view of how the plant is laid out. A simple layout should include matching inventory per machine (thread storage behind each embroidery machine, for example), and staging areas divided by

job with caps “in one area, the small left-chest jobs in another area and the large jacket-back or full-front chest jobs should be in another area,” Jagger writes in her book, *The Truth About Embroidery Business Success: 7 Elements to a Highly Profitable Home-Based Embroidery Business*.

INVEST WISELY

“You should only invest in new machines if it makes sense for your business,” says Jeff Taxdahl, owner and president of Jordan, MN-based Thread Logic. That seems obvious, but too many companies, particularly those new to the industry, think plunking a large fortune into the latest equipment is the way to a more efficient, profitable business. While it’s not the worst idea ever, industry insiders say older machines can be just as efficient,



RAMP UP

WANT TO CUT COSTS AND INCREASE EFFICIENCY? IT’S NOT TOO HARD, PRODUCTIVE DECORATORS SAY. BUT THERE ARE CERTAIN CHALLENGES THAT CAN BE A DECORATOR’S UNDOING IF THEY’RE NOT NIPPED IN THE BUD.

START COUNTING.

Something as simple as counting can make all the difference in the world, says Joe Thompson, marketing manager for Stitch Designers (asi/741145), based in Louisville, KY. Even the best suppliers have an “error rate of 2% to 3%,” says Thompson, about apparel suppliers sending orders with missing garments. That’s a lot of missed items when you’re fielding upward of 2,500 orders a month. By counting before decorating begins, the company spots missing pieces before they hit the production floor.

LESS IS MORE.

It seems counterintuitive, but sometimes fewer heads on an embroidery machine offer greater production, says Anna Johnson, president and owner of Phoenix-based Super Embroidery and Screen Printing (asi/700101). The more heads, the greater chance of thread breaks, Johnson says. Plus, garment turnover is faster on a machine with fewer heads.

COUNT ON CONTINGENCIES.

At least once a day Jeff Taxdahl hears this from a client: “We don’t want orange shirts. We want blue shirts.” Mind you, orange was the color of their original purchase. For Taxdahl, owner and president of Thread Logic, a decorator in Jordan, MN, being flexible is part of the daily decorating grind. How do you roll with the punches? Standardize processes and always make sure at least one machine or shift is flexible enough to handle sudden changes. Most decorators say they also don’t operate at 100% percent capacity – in staff or equipment. That way they can move work around to accommodate unexpected hiccups.

cost less and reduce costs, particularly for new decorators with a fledgling foothold in the marketplace.

Since 1985, Stitch Designers (asi/741145) has purchased Happy embroidery machines. And while the Louisville, KY-based decorator isn't opposed to investing in new equipment, it knows a bargain when it sees one, says Joe Thompson, the company's marketing manager. A new 18-head Happy embroidery machine can run as much as \$140,000, Thompson says. "We picked up three of those last year for less than \$20,000 total." Because of some companies tanking in the recession, the industry has plenty of used machines from which to choose. In Stitch Designers' case, the company has a long-time employee who specializes in Happy machines and can keep older ones running beautifully.

Second only to machinery, employees are perhaps a decorator's biggest investment. For that reason, it's crucial to cross-train them, Taxdahl says. That way, virtually anyone who comes across an order

can instinctively spot a potential mistake. "The last thing we want to do is embroider the wrong color long on the wrong color shirt," says Taxdahl of his 12-member staff. "Then we've got a problem."

AUTOMATE, IF POSSIBLE

Productivity is often lost unknowingly in daily activities that are seemingly productive, but really just time wasters. "If anybody in the back of the shop has to walk up front and ask, 'what does this mean?' in reference to a written job order or note, you're doing it wrong," Atkinson says. "One of our rules is no handwritten notes."

For that reason, many decorators say they're opting to automate many of their processes. In fact, plenty of shops are automating jobs from the time they enter their systems until the second they leave the shop floor and are shipped to end-users. It clarifies order instructions and also saves time. "Having the ability to talk to everybody in the company at once without having to get out of your

chair is efficient," Atkinson says.

Visual Impressions uses Shopworx, a business and order management software system. While other decorators insist that orders should be automated if at all possible, they disagree on how to do that. Many say free programs such as Google Docs (docs.google.com) are sufficient, while others say they rely on Excel. Regardless, systemizing orders is the key.

"We have a software system that doesn't allow us to put an order into production until all the blanks are filled in," says Andy Shuman, vice president of Rockland Embroidery (asi/734150), a contract decorator based in Topton, PA. What's more, Shuman adds, on any given day the company can be fielding 1,800 different orders. Thanks to automation and the company's software virtually anyone who answers the phone can instantly look the order up and respond to customers asking for updates. "I don't know that we'd have a way to find the order without the software."

BEST

ADVICE

FROM
**PRODUCTIVITY
EXPERTS**

INDUSTRY VETERANS AND
EXPERIENCED DECORATORS OFFER
THEIR BEST TIPS FOR IMPROVING
YOUR SHOP'S EFFICIENCY.

Tip:

USE CLOUD-BASED DOCUMENTS TO SHARE AND COLLABORATE.

How to:

Use cloud-based document creation and management programs to share information or to collaborate on projects. Internally, creating a document and inviting critical team members to work and comment online prevents wasted time and effort tracking changes and moving traditional documents between participants via e-mail. Moreover, as cloud-based services often have versioning capability, it becomes easy to see who made changes and to roll an altered document back to previous versions of any document at will. With the variable access control, your team can share read-only versions of documents with other departments. These documents can even be used as

management tools for simple internal projects; with a communal repository for notes, scheduling and assets, you can keep all participants involved in a project or job informed.

Used with clients, the same benefits apply: When you're creating spreadsheets for order gathering, as you might do when aiding a club or event sponsor to collect individual orders for bulk production, using a cloud-based solution allows decorators to help in organization and correction of data; should changes occur outside of the initial order, live updates to the present counts can be made.

My story:

"I recently needed to manage a large order that consisted of many individual sponsors, each with their own logos and personalization, being given sponsor-reward jackets for an event. Using a

cloud-based spreadsheet, I encouraged my client to track their orders live with me, and I, in return, tracked logo preview approvals and production on the same sheet. This proved incredibly handy when, close to the event, the organizers were forced to send sponsors directly to us to create and complete decoration on their jackets. I was able to track these ‘stragglers’ and additions with ease, allowing for transparent production and billing.” – *Erich Campbell, Black Duck Inc.*

Tip:

BE IN CONTROL OF YOUR ENTIRE ORDER CYCLE.

How to:

Workflow is always important so your business runs smoothly. Having a shipping/receiving area that’s organized will always set the stage for your entire order process. When you’re taking orders, use a computer-based program to track them. If you take orders on paper forms, always transfer them into the online system. If you order your client’s product, use a numbered purchase order form that lists the order date, items ordered, supplier name and address. This helps verify that the product has been ordered, whether it will ship together or separately and when it’ll arrive.

A purchase order is also a great help when you receive the order. If you’re a contract house, always require your customers to provide a purchase order with this information for your receiving department. Otherwise, you might mistakenly receive the wrong products, sizes or colors; or you may not realize you’re receiving partial shipments if some pieces shipped from a different location.

Having specific areas for partial orders (row A), incorrect orders (row B, waiting for art/color approval (rows C and D) and complete orders (rows E, F, G) makes

staging for decoration much easier.

My story:

“In our shipping area, we painted 24-inch squares back-to-back in rows. Then, we numbered the rows A, B, C, D, E and F, and the squares 1, 2, 3 and so on. When we receive or partially receive an order, we enter into our order-management system that it’s located on, for example C6 or F2. This way, it’s very easy to find once the completed order is ready to go into the production area or once the art is approved and ready for staging. Note: You can also use this system using dry-erase boards, if you write out the rows and numbers for locating orders.” – *Anna Johnson, Super Embroidery and Screen Printing (asi/700101)*

Tip:

CREATE A PROFITABLE PRICING LIST.

How to:

You want to offer a competitive price (that’s based on your costs, not your competitors’ pricing). Your quoting strategy should be based on two factors: What it costs you and how much profit you want with the job.

The best overall strategy is to sell your value proposition, which is what you bring to the table, rather than being the lowest quote possible. Do you have a great art staff, speedy service, knowledgeable industry veterans, free delivery or other wonderful things that set you apart from the competition? In the decorated-garment industry, there are many niches that companies service, and it’s important that you scope out your area carefully. Because of the industry’s complexities, and the fact that nearly every job is a custom deal, it’s hard to find a price list that will fit a “one-size-fits-all” structure. However, calculating what it costs you to do each step in your shop is the key to understanding how to build a basic price



SCAN HERE
to download a sample
embroidery price-
planning spreadsheet.

matrix that you can use with your customers. Here are a few steps:

1. TOTAL YOUR OPERATING EXPENSES AND DETERMINE YOUR OVERHEAD.

These are your basic costs: Your building rent or mortgage, utilities, insurance, equipment and so on. Calculate how many garments you can print per month and using your basic business expenses; divide to get your overhead cost per garment.

2. FOR EACH STEP IN PRODUCTION, DO TIME STUDIES.

Using the assigned labor dollars, calculate what it costs you for each basic labor task. These tasks are items like entering an order, checking inventory, designing a shirt, burning a screen, mixing ink, printing or stitching a shirt, folding and poly-bagging a shirt or any other repetitive task, for example.

Calculate this by using labor dollars divided by garments decorated too, but it’s good to know what each step along the way costs you. Your labor dollars are generally the biggest variable and hardest to control without a good management team.

3. YOU CAN’T IMPRINT MANY SHIRTS WITHOUT CONSUMABLES

(like thread, backing, ink, emulsion, chemicals, screens and more). Divide the expense on consumables by the yearly impression total to get your direct cost for decorating.

When you total these costs, this will give you a general idea what it costs you to imprint a shirt. This is a basic number, as the actual cost will vary with the specific order. The size of the job, design complexity, garment type and color will all influence the true cost. If you have this extra variable cost, you can then add it to

“HAVING THE ABILITY TO TALK TO EVERYBODY IN THE COMPANY AT ONCE WITHOUT HAVING TO GET OUT OF YOUR CHAIR IS EFFICIENT.”

MARSHALL ATKINSON, VISUAL IMPRESSIONS (ASI/743500)

the customer's specified shirt for the order and get your basic per-shirt price.

Most pricing structures are based on adding the garment price (cost and shipping) to the decorating price. Next, decide what profit you want to make on the job. For pricing matrices, the percentage markup starts higher for smaller-quantity orders and gradually lowers for larger quantities. Decide what you want to display on a quote: Some shops just give one price; others give line-item explanations on all charges (shirts, screens, ink, number of flashes, number of stitches, artwork and digitizing fees, etc.).

The value in using your own information to build the price is that it's based on your company's performance and what it costs you to produce the job. To find a higher margin, simply find methods of reducing your expenses. This can be as simple as bulk-ordering supplies (such as ordering ink in 55-gallon drums instead of one-gallon buckets or thread in bulk), starting a sustainability program to reduce your energy consumption, or purchasing equipment to automate tasks instead of having a staff member perform the duty. The key is to think about your workflow, how and why you're doing something and determine if there's a better method available for the same task. With some thought and planning, you can reduce your expenses and build more profit into your jobs. — Marshall Atkinson, *Visual Impressions (asi/743500)*

Tip:

CONTROL YOUR WORKFLOW.

How to:

Though you may see yourself as an embroiderer, you're really a manufacturer who's producing a final product that's the sum of several independent components that are all assembled in your shop. Apply an assembly-line mentality to your workflow. To keep it running continuously and efficiently, have all materials on hand when required and be vigilant against bottlenecks in production that can jam up the system.

ORDERING: The first step is to make sure you have all the required raw materials, which in your case means your digitized design, blank apparel, threads, backing, bobbins and so on. For specialty jobs, that list could also include 3-D foam, sequins, fabric and adhesives. When you close a sale, immediately order or confirm that you have the necessary materials for the job.

SCHEDULING: A simple method is to add each new job to a Microsoft Outlook task list and check off each required item as it arrives. Once the task entry is completed, simply drag it into an open spot on your Outlook production calendar so you know it's ready to run.

STAGING: In addition to your electronic tracking, set up a physical area in the shop to store the actual materials for each job. Investing in industrial shelves and laundry baskets is a simple solution because it's very visual. Print out a copy of the job and tape it to the basket(s). As the items arrive place them in the basket and check it off. This keeps everything in sight, but

not in the way.

PRODUCTION: As your jobs come up on the calendar, move the baskets into your hooping area and start producing. When finished garments come off the machine, don't let them pile up. Have a dedicated finishing area where you place the garments as you unhoop them. (This could be as simple as more baskets.)

FINISHING: Ideally you can trim threads and cutaway excess backing while other items are sewing. But there are cases where it will just have to wait until later. Either way, having a designated area simplifies the tasks and keeps things moving. Ensure you have enough space to fold and pack the garments neatly and cleanly. This may also serve as your shipping area. — Jimmy Lamb, *Sawgrass Technologies*

Tip:

KEEP YOUR DOWNTIME TO A MINIMUM WITH CAREFUL PRODUCTION PLANNING.

How to:

Begin your production planning by creating a list of all work orders for the upcoming week. Focus on the fact that most work orders contain multiple production jobs such as shirts, caps, aprons and so on. List all of the individual jobs within the work orders.

Be aware that a common production mistake is to process jobs in the order you receive them. However, except for a rush order, it's far better to schedule your work by garment type and production settings, to maximize machine run time by minimizing the downtime associated with job setup.

Once you've create your job list, write the details next to each job using the following breakdowns as a reference:

FIRST-LEVEL BREAKDOWN by style of frame/hoop: The time to change from cap to tubular or tubular to sash equates to unproductive downtime, especially if it

has to be done multiple times during one work shift.

SECOND-LEVEL BREAKDOWN by size of frame/hoop: The first couple of runs of something different are always slower as the operator adjusts his routine to accommodate the change. Once his comfort level reaches peak performance, his output increases. Because of this, it's more efficient to work with the larger designs as a group, then the medium designs as a group and then the smallest ones.

THIRD-LEVEL BREAKDOWN by garment/product type: Fabric type and thickness affect hooping. T-shirts must be treated differently than sweatshirts, which must be treated differently than denim shirts, and so on.

FOURTH-LEVEL BREAKDOWN by thread colors: Changing threads on a machine is time consuming. Swapping four colors of thread on a six head means 24 cones total. At 30 seconds per cone, that's 12 minutes of downtime.

Now organize and schedule your jobs by grouping them initially by type of hoop/frame. Then break down each of those groups into sub-groups by size of hoop frame. Then, break down each of those sub-groups into additional sub-groups by garment/product type. Finally, look at your thread colors and sequence the jobs to minimize changing out any threads.

For example, the work order for Joe's Restaurant contains polo shirts, aprons and caps. The polo shirts will be sewn using small tubular hoops, the aprons with a clamping system and the caps using cap frames. This work order actually has three separate jobs. Make three copies of the work order and place one copy with each job in order to keep up with where they belong. Repeat this process for the remaining work orders. You're ready to schedule the work based on your groupings. You'll save time and money by keeping your machines running at maximum efficiency.

“WHENEVER YOU WORK THROUGH A BOTTLE-NECK TO CREATE A SMOOTHER WORKFLOW, YOU’RE GOING TO CREATE A BOTTLENECK DOWNSTREAM.”

ROB DUBOW, DUBOW TEXTILE (ASI/700107)

Tip:

CREATE AN ORGANIZED PRODUCTION AREA TO KEEP YOUR OPERATIONS RUNNING EFFICIENTLY.

How to:

In your shop design, you must have easy access to everything you need, but not necessarily everything you own. The focus should be to store the items most frequently used within the easiest reach of your operator, while less-important tools are positioned further away to keep the work area uncluttered. Here, we'll show how to create one work area (which optimally would include up to three single-head machines run by one operator), so repeat this process for each separate equipment work station in your shop.

Start by creating a list of all tools and supplies that are necessary for running production such as bobbins, threads, needles, backing, hoops, tools and office supplies. Rank each item on a scale of one to three based on frequency of use, with one being constantly, two being periodically and three being occasionally. Then, draw three concentric circles on a sheet of paper and place an “X” in the center. The “X” represents your machine; each of the circles will be for items based on frequency of use. This will help you decide where to physically place things.

CIRCLE 1: If you're standing in front of your machine, circle one should be within arm's reach, a distance of up to four feet from the machine. Everything labeled as a “one” should fit neatly within this area. Get creative and invest in some small containers with magnets or suction cups

for holding things like nippers, tweezers and bobbins. Simply stick the containers on the machine for easy access.

CIRCLE 2: These items, which should be dedicated to hooping, should be within six to eight feet of your machine. Note: You don't need to store hoops in the immediate area, other than the ones being used for the current job. Ideally, since you spend a lot of time on a computer, it should be placed within this space too.

CIRCLE 3: This is where you'll place items that need to be accessed occasionally, such as threads and tools. Specifically, threads are only accessed between jobs, so they don't need to be in the center of the action, and tools, spare parts, hoops, frames and sashes will generally go here.

Next, invest in the proper storage containers for your supplies and equipment. Storing things neatly and consistently is a big key for staying organized and keeping everything accessible. Review and invest in closet organization systems and see what you can use for your shop. Label items and always put them away after use. Finally, think of your production process as an assembly line. You receive your raw goods, stage them, hoop them, sew them, finish them, pack them and ship them out the door. The idea is to keep the assembly line moving without anything falling off or piling up. A proper shop layout will keep your production process running smoothly. —JL

Tip:

USE ELECTRONIC TOOLS AND APPS TO ASSIST WITH SCHEDULING AND TASK MANAGEMENT.

How to:

Before you jump into hiring additional employees, use e-based tools for task management. Stick with a handful of e-programs and apps that easily communicate with each other on multiple devices. Beware of phone apps that don't interface with your core programs.

1. GET TOTAL ACCESS. Set up a Microsoft Outlook exchange server so that you can access and manage your contacts, task list, calendar and e-mail on your computer, smartphone and tablet. Also place your documents on a Windows SkyDrive so you can access your files anytime, especially on sales calls. In addition, programs like Microsoft OneNote that interface with Outlook and SkyDrive give you the ability to make notes on the fly and access them later, eliminating all paper notes.

2. MANAGE YOUR CUSTOMER DATA.

You need an efficient way to manage sales leads, track marketing campaign effectiveness, create customer profiles and more. For smaller shops on a budget, Microsoft offers a plug-in for Outlook 2010 and 2013 called Business Contact Manager.

3. CREATE AN "IRRITATION LIST." As you encounter bottlenecks in your business, record them in an OneNote file on whatever electronic device is closest at hand; this list will help you paint an accurate picture of the daily challenges of running your shop. Each week, review the list and see where your challenges are, and focus on the ones that impact your business most.

Tip:

INVEST IN A SUBLIMATION SETUP.

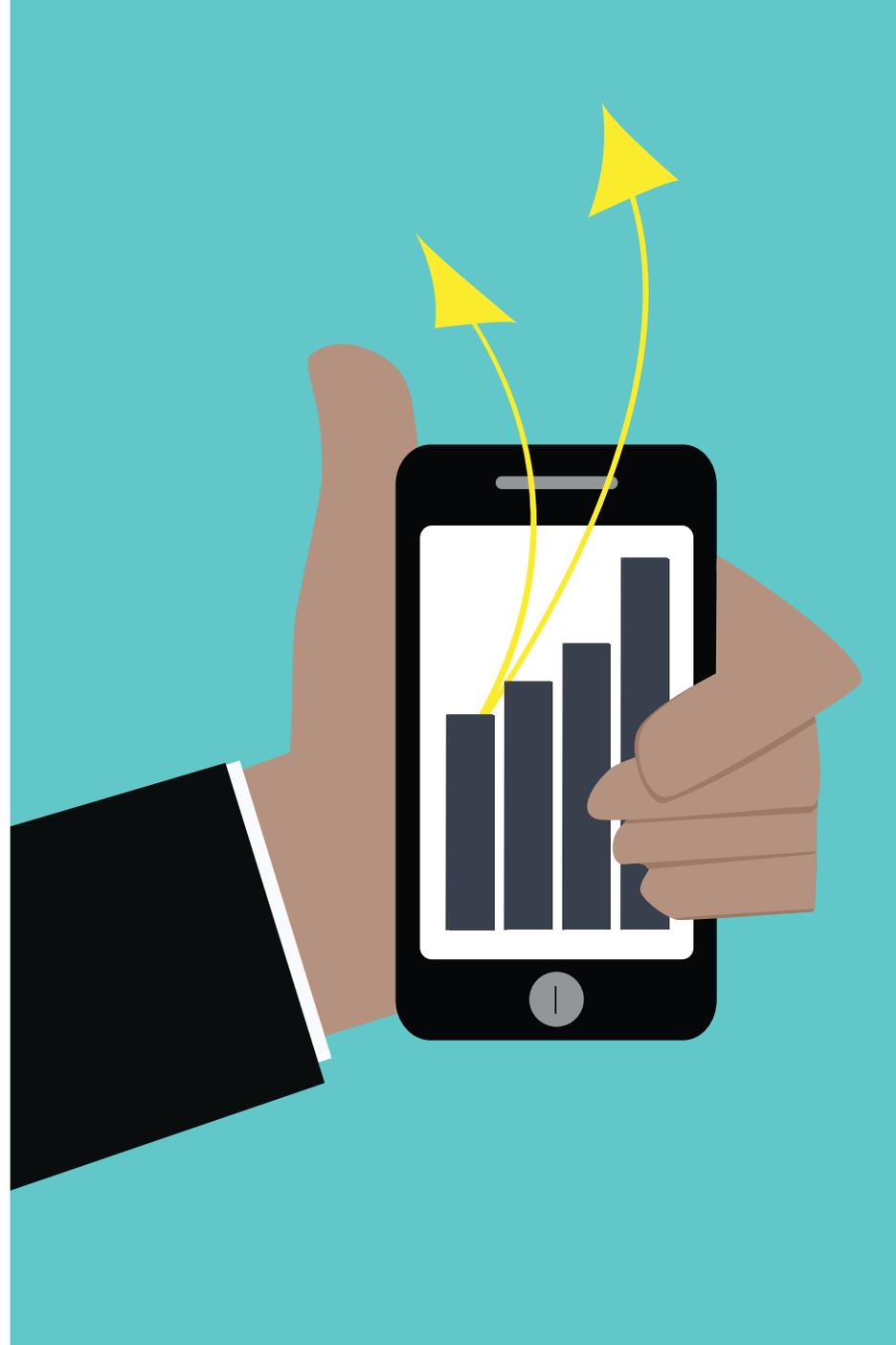
How to:

Sublimation gives you the biggest bang

for your buck since you can customize apparel and many types of promotional items. You need 500 square feet or less for your setup, and you can also trailer your sublimation setup at fairs and other events; plan to spend between \$2,500-\$5,000 for your initial equipment and supplies. In our shop, for example, we have an Epson 1400 with a bulk-ink system, a Knight Combo swing-away press, a Knight hat press and a Knight 16" by 20" swing-away press, 12 mug wraps and two Euro Convection Ovens. You'll also need transfer paper for imprinting ceramic,

polyester and cotton products.

MYSTORY: "Our company, which started out of our home 10 years ago, devoted 144 square feet to sublimation. This process carried low overhead and wasn't messy. This process allowed us to fulfill one-piece orders, up to hundreds of pieces. By selling sublimated products for a year or two, it allowed us to build up the client base to afford to go after our embroidery equipment next. The sublimation process was a great building block to get us into other processes." — Howard Potter, *A & P Master Images (asi/702505)*





NEXT-GENERATION TRAINING

Like never before, apparel-decorating equipment and software vendors are delivering valuable, multi-faceted training to customers online and in-person – helping decorators ramp up their productivity.



The Hirsch Solution Studio is a state-of-the-art, apparel-decorating technology and training center.

TION NG

By Christopher Ruvo

When companies give their clients the tools and support to thrive, those customers tend to stay loyal, creating a mutually beneficial cycle of success. Recognizing this, leading providers of decorating equipment and software have been ramping up their online and in-person training offerings. For many decorators, the education outreach has proved a boon, helping them to maximize the potential in their equipment and become more operationally efficient. For the training providers, it has been an excellent investment that keeps customers coming back. “When you care about your clients’ businesses,” says Joe Longtin, marketing director at Anajet (asi/16000), “your customers take care of you.”

The story of Doris Bowyer demonstrates how excellent training benefits both decorators and vendors. When it came to digitizing properly, the home-based embroiderer admits she had an uphill battle. But the going became much easier after she invested in Wilcom EmbroideryStudio. Wilcom offers a host of training options for the digitizing and decoration software; Bowyer decided to take advantage of several days of training at the company’s Norcross, GA facility.

After flying in from Ontario, the owner of Mom’s Sewing Room squeezed every drop of knowledge she could from the intensive daily sessions. The trip was well worth it. Bowyer emerged a much better digitizer, which has helped her expand her client base, grow sales and increase customer satisfaction. She credits the training – and ongoing support she gets from Wilcom – with playing a key role in her growing success. And for that, she plans to remain a Wilcom customer for the long haul: “They’ve been a dream come true.”

WEB-U-CATION

More than ever before, industry machine and software providers are using the Internet as a medium for training, delivering in-depth Web-based guidance that empowers decorators to learn without having to leave their shops. Over the last year, for example, ColDesi has expanded its online education. The distributor of SWF embroidery machines, DTG garment printers and more has offerings like instructor-led training that is supported by knowledge-building videos. These Web classes were a perfect fit for Cheryl Pittman. An Alabama-based software engineer by day, Pittman didn’t have time to travel to ColDesi’s Florida headquarters for on-site training. However, she was in need of education to get her home-based decorating business – C Marie Designs LLC – out of the gates. In two day-long ColDesi classes – one on embroidery, the other on direct-to-garment printing – Pittman got the training she needed without disrupting her packed schedule.

Before the sessions, ColDesi sent Pittman information for her to study so she could hit the ground running once the classes started. During each session, an instructor walked her through informative PowerPoint slides, showed training videos and answered everyone’s questions. “It was very well organized,” Pittman says. Fortified with a strong training foundation, Pittman soon put her machines to work. If she encountered an issue or had a question, she contacted ColDesi and got great support. “I feel very proficient now,” declares Pittman, noting that her sales are steadily growing. “I’m working with more and more local businesses.”

Founded in 2002, the Pantograms Embroidery Academy has trained more than 5,000 embroidery companies. Here, trainees learn lessons that will help them succeed.



EDUCATION CONSIDERATIONS

Before investing in apparel-decorating equipment or software, ascertain what kind of training and ongoing support the company selling you the product provides. Here are a few questions to help you develop a picture of a company's educational offerings.

1. WHAT KIND OF IN-PERSON TRAINING DO YOU OFFER?

Do I have to come to you and/or can you send an expert to my shop?

2. WHAT KIND OF ONLINE TRAINING DO YOU PROVIDE?

Do you offer instructional videos, webinars or one-on-one live coaching sessions?

3. IS YOUR TRAINING/EDUCATION INCLUDED with the price of my purchase or does it cost extra?

4. DO YOU PROVIDE MORE ADVANCED-LEVEL EDUCATION?

If so, is it free?

5. WHAT KIND OF ONGOING TECHNICAL SUPPORT DO YOU PROVIDE?

Is it free? Will I get to talk to a real person when I have a question?

Bernie Donahue is another decorator to have reaped the rewards of online learning. Looking to capitalize on the growing market for personalization and small-volume runs, this embroiderer/screen printer recently diversified by investing in a Digital HeatFX system for producing full-color, laser-print heat transfers. The owner of King Don Press, Donahue then took a one-on-one online training session taught by Digital HeatFX Product Specialist Katie Bitter. In it, he learned machine basics, artwork requirements, best practices, transfer-

paper usage and a variety of tips and tricks.

Through a webcam, he was able to watch Bitter demonstrating how to use the equipment. "It was good step-by-step instruction," Donahue says. "If I had a question, she'd stop and explain everything. It only took about an hour, but when we were done I felt confident I could do this commercially." And do it he has. "I only just got started, but the more I put out there the more business I get," says Donahue, noting that the ongoing support from Digital HeatFX, a division of Pantograms Mfg. Co., has been superb. "It's why I'll keep buying from them."

The training from ColDesi and Digital HeatFX are just a few examples of the expanding online training options available to decorators. Late last year, for example, Anajet debuted a new end-user online tutorial for its main direct-to-garment printer line. Building upon the education success of the technical webinars Anajet has hosted since 2010, "AJU Online" helps decorators learn the skills they need for success with digital garment printing. "It's two hours, broken into chapters and available for free," Longtin says.

Elsewhere, Stahls' (asi/88984), which manufactures and sells heat-printing materials, machines and services, continues to build on its robust online training. Efforts include frequently hosting new webinars on heat printing and digital printing at www.greatgarmentgraphics.com, a Stahls' site where training videos on how to use equipment, software and more is available. "It's our philosophy to educate customers and provide them with the resources to meet their goals," says Andrea Pietrowsky, marketing specialist at Stahls'.

THE IN-PERSON EDGE

While Web-based training is increasingly popular, equipment and software providers recognize that in a tactile business like apparel decoration the need for a hands-on experience remains paramount. That's why Hirsch International (asi/14982) opened its state-of-the-art Hirsch Solution Studio

just outside Charlotte, NC little more than a year ago. The studio is at once a showroom, an idea incubator and a laboratory for experimentation – a place to learn how cutting-edge machinery, software and techniques can make apparel decorators more successful. Manned by staffers with hundreds of years of combined experience, what really makes the studio special is that Hirsch encourages decorators to visit for training and consultation in a simulated production space that features Tajima embroidery machines, Seit laser systems, Kornit digital garment printers, MHM screen-printing equipment and more.

Not long ago, Atech Imagewear took Hirsch up on the invite. Already a Tajima user, the Concord, NC-based shop was keen to gain a competitive edge by expanding its in-house services beyond embroidery. To get a firm handle on how best to diversify, Atech staffers visited the Hirsch Solution Studio. "It was a huge educational experience," says Atech employee Patty Kellis. Consulted by Hirsch professionals, Kellis and others from the Atech team experimented with Kornit printers and the Seit laser bridge system. "There were tons of samples, and we got really great ideas," Kellis says. Ultimately, Atech invested in a Kornit garment printer and the Seit laser bridge, which expedites the appliqué process while expanding its possibilities. By providing multiple decorating mediums under one roof, Atech has captured more business from current clients and attracted new customers with whom it may not have otherwise connected. "We can do things now that other shops can't do," Kellis says. "We have a new edge."

Like Atech, the desire to diversify in a bid to earn more sales is what compelled Donahue – a screen printer initially – to invest in embroidery. Still, the Wyomissing, PA-based decorator confesses that he was far

CARING CONSULTATION

While equipment and software providers are intensifying efforts to educate decorators, they're not the only ones offering the practical training embroiderers need to succeed. For example, the National Network of Embroidery Professionals, a trade association for apparel decorators, advises members across the country. Meanwhile, top-notch consultants like Joyce Jagger, owner of The Embroidery Coach, and Deborah Jones, owner of My Embroidery Mentor, are guiding stitchers everywhere to greater success.

One such decorator is Bob Dandurand, owner of Sun Prairie, WI-based Elite Embroidery & Screen Printing. The training

he received from Jagger helped him revolutionize his business. Before the education, Dandurand's store focused on selling hockey and figure-skating items. When embroidery was needed to embellish, say, a hockey bag or sweatshirt, Dandurand contracted out the stitching. But time and again, the quality of the decoration and service didn't make par, so Dandurand decided to get into embroidery for himself, though he knew nothing about running a machine or a stitching business.

To get up to snuff, he turned to Jagger for help. Through one-on-one Web-based sessions, Dandurand learned the meat and potatoes of embroidery. "She helped

me understand what I was doing," he says. "She really cared that I do well."

In the time that has elapsed since the initial training, Dandurand has sought and received additional consultation from Jagger many times. He has also benefitted from her online training videos. What he has learned has helped him shift the paradigm of his business: These days, more than 90% of Elite Embroidery's sales tally comes from apparel decoration work; the hockey/figure-skating component is but a small source of overall income. Says Dandurand: "We went from almost having to close the doors to growing by 30% per year."

“When you care about your clients’ businesses, your customers take care of you.”

Joe Longtin, *Anajet (asi/16000)*

from an adroit stitcher when he purchased machines from Pantograms. Fortunately, however, Donahue was able to visit Pantograms Embroidery Academy to learn skills he would need to stitch skillfully.

Over the first two days of training, the Pantogram pros delivered Donahue essential insights on everything from threading and machine oiling, to correct tension, hooping, digitizing, machine mechanics and more. During a final half-day, he got a review of various course aspects, including digitizing. All the training came free with his purchase of a Toyota embroidery unit. "Once I got home and got going, the machine started running non-stop," Donahue says. "I had to get two more machines because I kept getting busier and busier."

Being busy is, happily, something with which Gene Wodzicki and Susan Asplin can identify. The co-owners of Color Image Designs & Road Warrior Graphix spend half the year traveling around the country

to fairs and carnivals to offer on-the-spot garment printing and custom-decorated signs, stickers and more. In tow with them are the Anajet mPower printers they use to embellish T-shirts. The training the pair received at Anajet University – the Costa Mesa, CA facility where the direct-to-garment printer provider educates customers – played a pivotal role in giving Asplin and Wodzicki the know-how they needed to create standout garment graphics and to keep the machines in tip-top working order on their extensive travels.

In particular, the pair liked that the education was extensive and hands-on. "Being able to print on as many black and white shirts as we wanted made us more comfortable with the machine," says Asplin, noting they weren't just shown how to do things like pre-treat garments and handle ink depletion and air in the lines; they were able, under tutelage from Anajet trainers, to work over and over again on these processes

and fixes until they understood them thoroughly. "All of us learn best by doing," says Asplin.

Steven Reed agrees. An accomplished fine-art painter and apparel decorator, the owner of Perfect Image Portraits in Harper Woods, MI took a consultative class and training at a Stahls' facility. The experience set Reed up for success with his VersaCAMM SP300i, a machine that produces heat transfers for apparel and much more, including vehicle wraps, labels, banners and signs. "What I learned," Reed says, "has helped me grow my business by 30% over the last six months."

Results like that make it clear: Quality education helps decorators prosper, and that profitability can come back to benefit the equipment and software providers that give them quality training and support.

CHRISTOPHER RUVO is a staff writer for *Stitches*; follow him on Twitter @ChrisR_ASI and contact him at cruvo@asicentral.com.

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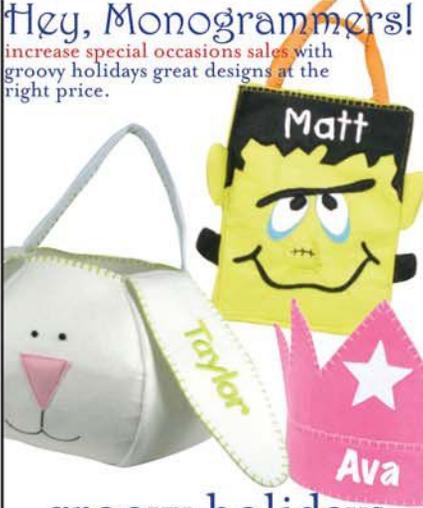
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COMING NEXT ISSUE

What's coming up in February *Stitches*

by Nicole Rollender



The Machine Issue

• Ready to invest in new decorating equipment? We'll show you the newest single heads, multi heads, digital printers, sublimation printers, screen-printing equipment, heat presses and more – with real users reviews.



New-Wave Decoration

• Did you know that you can direct-to-garment print on a surfboard? Or sublimate a whole host of hard goods like iPhone cases? Get great ideas on new ways to use your decorating to increase your revenue stream.

Plus ...

• Step by step, we show you how to create a trendy multimedia design



• What to do when your competitors slash their prices

needle watch



Needle Patrol

Our friend Slick (an embroidery machine needle) has hidden himself somewhere in this issue. He might be in an editorial photo, graphic or text – he's not in an advertisement. If you find the needle, send us a note that says, "I found the January needle on page XX," along with your name, company, address and phone number (or e-mail address) so we can contact you if you're the winner. Mail or fax it to us at *Stitches*, Attn: Needle Patrol, 4800 Street Rd., Trevose, PA 19053; fax: (215) 953-3107. Also, tell us a little about your business. No phone calls please; you must respond in writing. Hurry! Responses for the January needle are due by January 31, 2014. From the correct responses, we'll randomly select one winner who'll receive a \$100 gift certificate, courtesy of Madeira USA, Laconia, NH. Please submit only one entry per drawing. We'll announce the winner in the March/April issue.



Slick Loves Good Digitizing

In the November issue, Slick hid on page 57 in the "And the Winners Are ..." cover story that revealed the winners of the 2013 *Stitches* Golden Needle Awards; he hid next to "Hot Rod Fishing" by Gary Holcomb, which won the Digitizing Best Multimedia Design Award. **Bonnie Tone**, owner of **Belton, SC-based ChickaTwee**, was chosen at random from a grand total of 36 responses. As this issue's winner, Bonnie will receive Madeira USA's gift certificate. Keep your eyes peeled for the industry's favorite game of hide and seek!

ASK AN EXPERT

By Erich Campbell

Your most pressing business dilemmas solved

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next issue, you'll learn just what to do when your competitors keep slashing prices. See you next issue!

Q *My workload is really starting to take off, and while that's great for business, orders are increasingly falling through the cracks, becoming last-minute emergencies when our production line becomes clogged, or information gets lost. What can I do to get my shop under control and become super-efficient?*

While it isn't great that you've already started to lose things in the shuffle, the fact that you aren't content to continue rushing from emergency to emergency shows you're in the right frame of mind to revamp your system. Provided that you aren't taking on more work than your shop can physically do, your problem likely hinges on a lack of organization. I'll trust that you've done the calculations it takes to know how many functional, running hours you have in each day and that when you take a job, you're forecasting needed production time with your stitch count estimations and establishing the quoted price. If you've got that handled, you're just missing structure.

Two simple rules will ultimately save you from this rut: One – get it out of your head and into a storage system, and two – everything goes into the system. No matter your method, having a steady, predictable and easily understood system by which your employees store, access and update information is critical. You need to choose the best organizational method or tool for the size of your business. For example, our mid-sized shop greatly benefits from

industry-specific shop management software. We use Shopworks' OnSite system. The ability to capture and centrally store all the critical information about jobs, paired with controlled, ubiquitous employee access to current purchasing, production and billing status for any job has made the system worth the purchase price. Having an all-in-one package, specifically for our industry, is an attractive solution for information gathering and automatic handling of production schedules.

If your shop is growing rapidly and your pace and volume requires complete organization and paper-free handling of all job assets just to keep up, evaluating how shop management software can fit into your budget may be a good idea. If, however, you're a small shop or can't manage the overhead of running your own server, look for something a little less complicated, though you'll trade functionality for price and ease of ownership.

If you use technology like a second brain, you'll find many applications and services to make information available on any device. There are several qualities to look for that make an app or service useful for shop organization. It should

be easy to access from any device (mobile, tablet and laptop/desktop) and allow for sharing data to multiple users. In your case, it should support calendaring or dated-list format for your job schedule. It should save consistently to the cloud for access at any time from any location. Almost any online calendaring or project management site or app can do all this, and that may be enough for a small shop if you're manually evaluating your current workload and assigning production dates to incoming jobs.

have its advantages. Even so, we all know that shops once ran well enough on entirely paper-based systems with little more than a communal calendar and a stack of folder-bound sheets of paper to keep them organized – though the tools can help, it's the habits that make organization really work.

Once you've decided what method you want to use, whether it's the old white-board-and-inbox combo, an online schedule with a cloud-based project manager, or a full suite of shop management

“ When you find that specialty tool you need, test it. ”

Provided your staffers have access to an Internet connection and a publicly available computer, these tools provide an easy way for everyone to stay on the same page without the hassle of learning complicated software. If you decide to share only your schedule, you may need a separate system (or struggle with old-fashioned paper shuffling) when it comes to art files or job information. If you can afford decoration-specific management software, it does

software, the real work starts with achieving cohesion with your staff. Get everyone on the same page you're bound to keep things organized better.

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



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