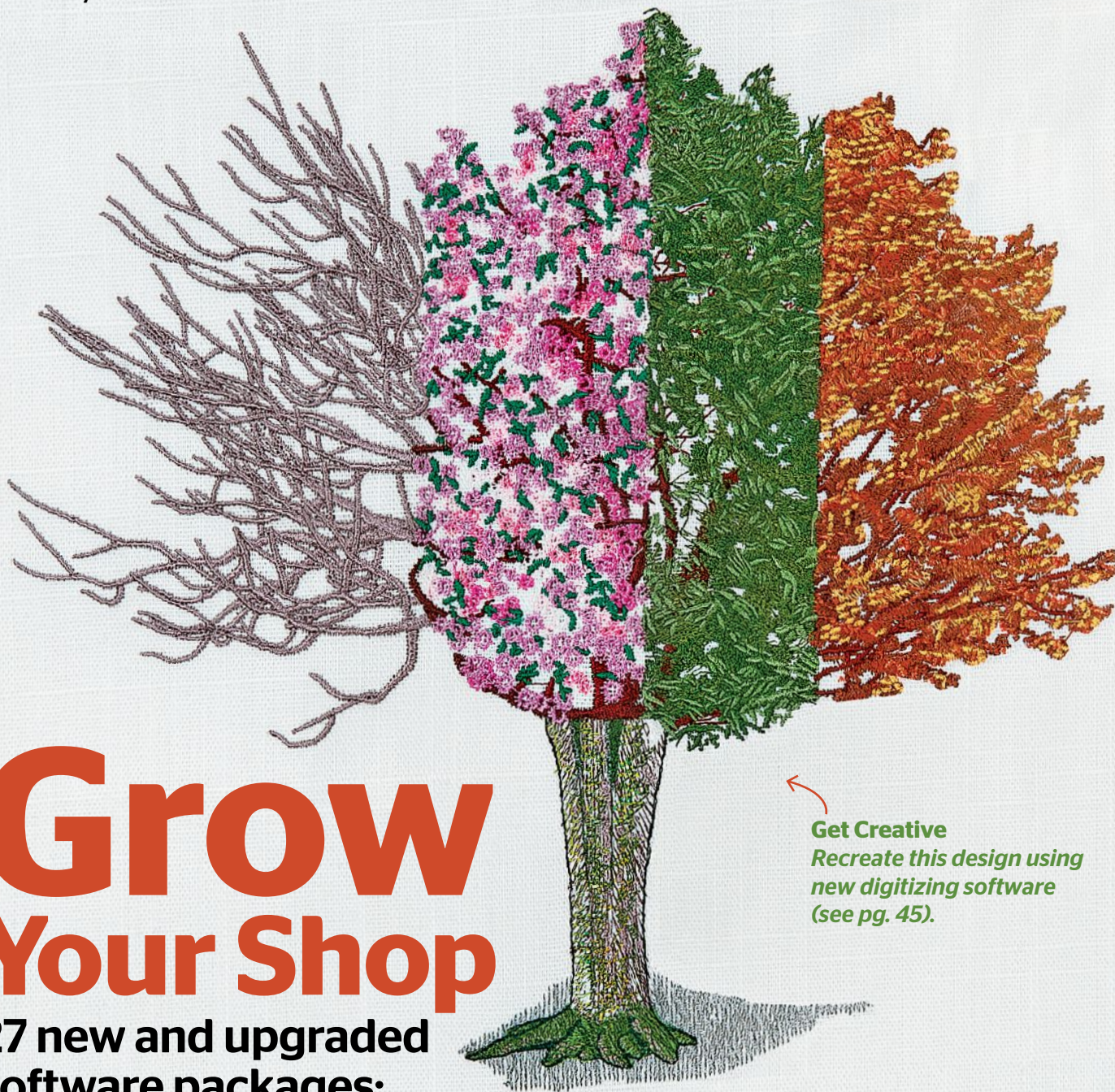


S·T·I·T·C·H·E·S

Embroidery's Voice & Vision

JULY 2015



Get Creative
Recreate this design using
new digitizing software
(see pg. 45).

Grow Your Shop

27 new and upgraded software packages:

- * Business management
 - * Digitizing and graphics
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 - * Specialty decoration
 - * Online designer tools
- + *User reviews*

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THE DIGITAL DECISION
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+ Ask An Expert: How to Make Money as a Contract Shop



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In their Words



I just want to thank you again for working with me over the last year...I am thankful for the relationship I have with Affinity Marketing and bridging the gap of young student's requests for their design ideas and working as a team to make sure we are doing things the right way.

- Phairground

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- Bunnies and Bows



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- Classic Alterations

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- The Polka Dot Press



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Getting Personal

Large retail brands have embraced the personalization trend, thanks to software that makes mass customization both scalable and profitable. Already firmly ensconced in the world of custom apparel, decorators can still learn from their example.

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2015 Software Guide

Stitches' annual Software Guide provides key information on the industry's latest software packages, from business management to monogramming and lettering and more, with user reviews from actual customers.

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The Digital Decision

Direct-to-garment and dye-sublimation printing have grown by leaps and bounds, but many decorators still ignore these burgeoning technologies.

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Stitches.com 13

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Pinterest.com/stitchesmag 14

What's hot from our Fashion We Love Now and Screen-Printed Designs boards.

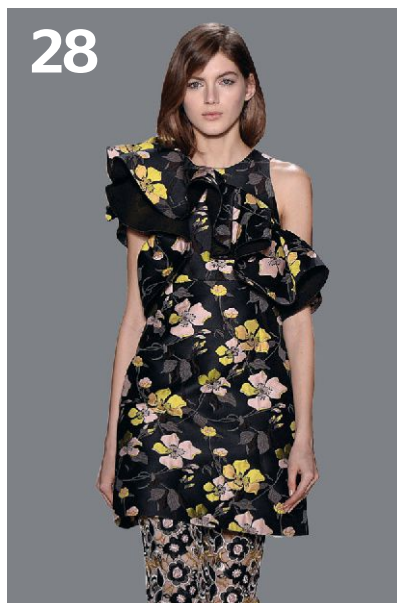
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Stitches Editor Nicole Rollender gets up close and personal with real estate mogul Barbara Corcoran; Senior Writer Theresa Hegel shows off a stylish T-shirt snagged at the ASI sample sale; and more.

Letters 16

Readers talk about an embarrassing and painful "disagreement" with an embroidery machine; the process of creating custom business management software; starting a decorating business in retirement; and more.

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Craig Mertens, president of Digital Art Solutions (asi/14970), talks about implementing rhinestone design services, facing competition from overseas and current opportunities for decorators.

Phil Stitch Answers 18

Phil finds men's robes in hunter green, compression shirts in royal blue, tennis racket covers and more.

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Kornit Digital (asi/14972) collaborates with the Fashion Institute of Technology on a digital printing challenge; Embroidery Mart-NASHVILLE set for August; and more.

World 21

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A New York shop finds success with state government sample show; bling scores with women in a motorcycle club; and more.

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Decorating & Fabric Trends 25

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Machine & Software Upgrades 26

Hot topics: Epson's SureColor F-Series lets you sublimite like a fashion designer; InkSoft lets decorators easily create a reciprocity strategy; and more.

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Quick tips: Increase your efficiency with Tajima TMAR-KC; see what's new in Floriani's digitizing software; and more.

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Sell dark florals, the hot hue amethyst orchid and metallic accents.

Showcase 31

The latest styles in woven shirts.

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Score with kids' team sports and spirit-wear.

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Brant Torres, a painter, knitter, weaver and embroiderer, traces much of his artistic expression to the passing of his mother.

Coming Next Issue 63

What to look forward to in August 2015 *Stitches*.

Ask an Expert 64

An expert talks about whether adding contract decoration to a shop that currently focuses on an end-user business model is the right step.

About the Cover
Design: Hillary Glen
Photography: Mark Prickett
Digitizing by Jay Fishman, Wicked Stitch of the East, using Wilcom
Embroidery Studio, an embroidery by Geri Finio, Studio 187



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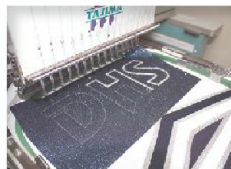
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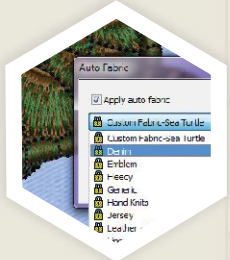
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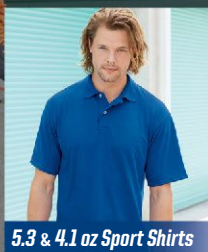
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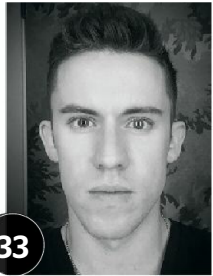


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Fact: In this month's "Inspiration" section of our "Look Book" department, we feature work from **BRANT TORRES**, assistant professor in the University of San Francisco's Department of English. Currently, Torres is working with pattern design and experimentation on knit fabrics. "I've also been working on weaving as a way to think of different ways to make a canvas for needlework," he says. "While I started off mostly with embroidery from patterns, I've been trying to venture out into projects that allow for original design."



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In this month's "Expert Weigh-In" section of our "Interact" department, we hear from **CRAIG MERTENS**, president of Digital Art Solutions (asi/14970), who talks about rhinestone trends, including multi-decoration with heat-press vinyl. "Glitter vinyl has become its own decorating category, and combining it with rhinestones is highly profitable and easy on the production side," he says. "Customization is essential to rhinestone multi-decoration. With a vinyl cutter, it's easy to add personalization or produce a spec sample, which is critical for potential clients. There's no substitute for letting them touch and feel a sample, especially if it's personalized."



64

In this issue's "Ask an Expert," **TRACEY TYREE**, national accounts manager at Louisville, KY-based Stitch Designers (asi/741145),

writes about what's involved when a shop decides to go contract – and the pros and cons. "As a contractor, your product is still the same," she writes. "However, what's involved is not. One benefit of contract work is that the initial legwork on a direct sell has already been done for you. You don't need to find a product your client will like, sizing and collecting prices from assorted apparel suppliers, for example. You can focus on the manufacturing."

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NEXT LEVEL
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Get Personal



Big brands like Burberry and retail fixtures like LIDS offer their customers options to personalize apparel and accessories they sell using software that's available to shops in the decorated-apparel industry. In this month's cover story, "Getting Personal," Senior Staff Writer Theresa Hegel explores the personalization phenomenon and talks to brand insiders about

how they satisfy customers' needs. Then, you can turn to *Stitches' Annual Software Guide* on page 42 to peruse the 27 new and upgraded software packages available to you, including online design tools, digitizing and graphics software, and much more.

I asked *Stitches' Editorial Advisory Board* about the personalization trend – a common theme is personalization and custom embroidery mean different things to different shops, depending on production abilities. "A good model is Pottery Barn – they offer very limited fonts, numbers of characters per piece, thread colors and blanks they supply for profit," says Geri Finio, owner of Anne Arundel County, MD-based Studio 187. "It's created that way to make the purchase quick, simple, fast and, most important, profitable."

For wider-scale personalization with automated online tools,

"you set it up so the customer chooses one font and thread color from four choices, previews the order and verifies correct spelling," says Jimmy Lamb, manager of communications for Sawgrass Technologies. "Regardless of the method or system, it needs to be easy for the customer."

Lamb does caution that your system must feed orders in a production-friendly format to operators. "One of my large catalog customers used an inefficient semi-automated system that printed out paper copies of customer orders," he says. "The operators made spelling errors because they had to retype the information. By converting to a system with full automation for personalization, the customer had a better online experience and the operators received a bar-coded order that required a quick scan with a wand, and the design was loaded into the machine." The shop's spoilage rates plummeted and production efficiency went through the roof.

Automation also "allows for seasonal spikes in business without the need for extra labor," says Ed Levy, director of software technologies for Hirsch International. Personalization may not be for every shop, but there's software fit for any size shop to make custom work possible. Enjoy the issue!

Nicole M. Rollender

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Get Your Stitch Report

Stitches Senior Staff Writer Theresa Hegel shares some tips on how to use software to streamline shop operations in the latest *Stitch Report*. Watch the video on Stitches.com.



Podcast: A Solid Contract

Brian Goldberg, co-CEO of Pulse Microsystems, talks with Senior Writer Theresa Hegel about the popularity of personalization and how decorators can cash in on this lucrative trend. Listen to the podcast on Stitches.com.



The Perfect Order

In an industry where creativity and customization are expected every day, a lot can go wrong. Here is how to make each order absolutely perfect. Read the article on Stitches.com.

SOCIAL FEEDS



WE POSTED

In honor of Star Wars Day (May the fourth be with you), here are some awesome felt recreations of the original Star Wars films. Enjoy! bit.ly/1OUoir4

Stahls' is personalizing jerseys at the NFL Draft for the fourth year in a row: bit.ly/1c2w7KO

Digital printing technology manufacturer Kornit worked with New York's FIT on a design challenge focused on sustainable textile production: bit.ly/1dBJAJt

A Kentucky judge ruled that Lexington-based Hands On Originals had the right to refuse to print T-shirts for a 2012 gay pride festival: bit.ly/1lnB8ZP

According to Google's analysis of search data, tulle skirts and "emoji jogger pants" are among the biggest fashion trends this spring. bit.ly/1OXdbso

In her latest "Newbie Digitizer's Diary" blog, Geri Finio reveals the etiquette of webinars. Hint: It's not too different from how you should act in a live classroom: bit.ly/1EzE6cb

Why surrounding yourself with positive people is "crucial" to your health: huffto/1Dw90hc

Cintas Corp. says it has diverted more than 19.5 million plastic bottles from landfills, thanks to annual sales of its eco-friendly apparel collections, featuring polyester made from recycled plastic: bit.ly/1FhBtff



@ASI_STITCHES

"I'm trying to make embroidery more rock-and-roll," says textile designer Louise Gardiner on tattoo-inspired quilts: bit.ly/1bKzsg6

@THERESAHEGEL

@kornitdigital, @FIT collaborate on #ecofashion fabric design challenge: bit.ly/1JWlmCv #digitalprinting

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In #NHL post-season, clubs sell #NHLPlayoff #PromoProducts. But are all hockey fans buying? goo.gl/1NlrWE

@JAYBUSSELLE

Check out these Design Trends for 2015. #logo #graphicsmatter Infographic by @carlyokyle entm.ag/1CmtsUt

#EMBROIDERYCOACH Does Your Business Solve a Problem? #leadership #feedly buff.ly/1BS3DQ #TheEmbroideryCoach

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#Stitches State of the Industry report out. Tap into hot niche markets: bit.ly/1ApbwD #embroidery

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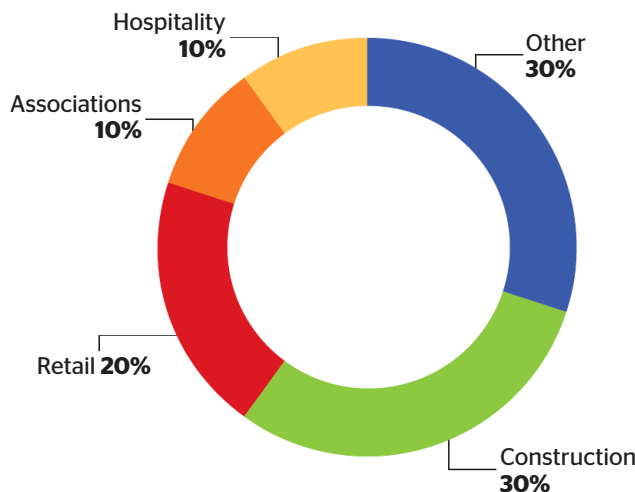
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INDUSTRY POLL

At ASICentral.com, we recently asked:

What niche market do you hope to break into - or grow sales with - in 2015?



Scan this code to read the entire blog entry by Theresa Hegel, senior writer for *Stitches*.



BLOG EXCERPT

Stitchwork Reversal of Fashion: Shirt Combines 24 Looks



Remember when reversible clothing was all the rage? Getting two different styles out of one garment seemed pretty cool. A new product, which recently had a Kickstarted presale, puts the reversible trend into overdrive. The MORF multi-shirt can be converted into up to 24 distinct looks. Think how much closet space you could save! I recently spoke with the garment's creator Tamara Salem to find out more about MORE.

Pinterest

Check out the following designs that we pinned on Stitches' Pinterest page – from the *Fashion We Love Now* and *Screen-Printed Designs* boards.

Visit Stitches' Pinterest page – and all our great boards – at [Pinterest/stitchesmag](https://www.pinterest.com/stitchesmag).

From the Board: Fashion We Love Now



This embroidered lace dress features a round neck and fitted top with sheer lace sleeves, from Erdem, erdem.com.



This Arielle dress features a graphic print based on the work of photographer Seydou Keita, from Temperley London, temperleylondon.com.



This vintage '50s-era dress features metallic silver, metallic gold, red and black inks, from 1stdibs, 1stdibs.com



This evening dress features Chantilly lace on the chest and sleeves, from Gucci, gucci.com.

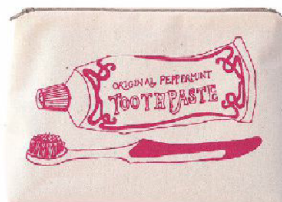
From the Board: Screen-Printed Designs



This onesie is made of organic cotton and features a screen print in non-toxic, water-based inks, from Sass & Peril, sassandperil.com.



This pashmina features a screen print of the blueprints for the original Cass Technical High School in Detroit, since demolished, from Cyber-optix on Etsy.com



This toothpaste travel bag is printed and sewn by UK-based artist Megan Alice England, from Not on the High Street, notonthehighstreet.com.



Heavy-duty cotton shopping tote includes a screen print of various grocery staples, based on an original drawing by Louise Lockhart, from The Printed Peanut, theprintedpeanut.co.uk.

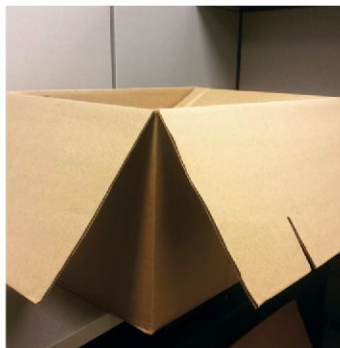
Instagram

Check out the following photos from Stitches' Instagram page.

Visit Stitches' Instagram page: [@stitches_mag](#).



Barbara Corcoran of [#SharkTank](#) is fabulous, according to *Stitches* Editor Nicole Rollender, who shared some backstage moments with the real estate mogul at [@theashow](#) New York.



Meanwhile, Senior Writer [@thegel13](#) still hasn't unpacked her cube after the *Stitches* office redecoration extravaganza. [#procrastination](#)



Snagged this awesome graphic tee at our parent company ASI's annual sample sale today. Could be a new favorite! [#CherryBomb](#)



Christina Clark, a student at [@centralpiedmontcc](#), works on her final [#screenprinting](#) project.



Loved the sense of humor in [@centralpiedmontcc](#) student Amber Dobbins' [#screenprinting](#) projects. [#glowinthedark](#) [#ufo](#)



Such gorgeous embellishments on [@byronlarsbm](#) garments. It's been a pleasure spending the day with him and watching his process. Can't wait to share it all with readers!



[@Byronlarsbm](#) choosing fabrics. Regram from [@msfabulousnyc](#).



New must-have product? [#monogrammed](#) fuzzy bowling shoe covers. You can really personalize anything. [#embroidery](#) at Stitches in Time in Concord, NC.



Buckets o' ink. [#screenprinting](#)



[#Fashion](#) designer [@byronlarsbm](#) shows off the [#embroidery](#) and other embellishments on his work at his NYC showroom.



Zach Blackburn teaches [#screenprinting](#) at [@centralpiedmontcc](#). A very hands-on class.



More student art from [@centralpiedmontcc](#) [#screenprinting](#) class.

Stitches readers sound off:

Avoid This Ouch!

I thought I'd share my "dis-agreement" with an embroidery machine. I give you permission to use the picture, however, I'm not overly proud of this, and would rather you not use my name. This X-ray was taken in October 2010 for an unrelated injury. I had no idea that the tip of a needle was still in my finger, as this accident had happened many years before. The needle is still in the bone of my finger, and (everyone asks), no, I don't have problems going through security at airports. It hurt, but

I only had one small drop of blood on my fingernail, and I immediately went back to work. Maybe by sharing this, *Stitches* can help save someone's finger and ego at the same time.

Anonymous by request

Do It Yourself

We're actually in the process of creating our own business management software. We're having it created to help with our company's needs and it will be usable for other companies in our line of work. We offer eight

different processes in-house, and this software will simplify the ordering process and production process from start to finish. It'll control the full gambit. Our company needed software that could streamline production, ordering, quality control, turnaround time and more to help keep our company's growth on track. We're hoping to have a consumer product out by sometime next year. This software will help companies get organized and take back control from all angles.

Howard Potter
A&P Master Images
(asi/702505), Utica, NY

Retirement Days

My business is just getting started. I still have a full-time job, but I'll retire in the near future. I'm an embroiderer

and heat printer working on a relatively small scale at the moment and focusing on producing quality work before jumping into full-time production. I look forward to receiving each issue of your magazine.

Mark R. Adkins
Marion, NC

Winner Takes All

We're a small business that sells awards, sporting goods and embroidery services. We've been in business for 35 years and we've been doing embroidery for approximately 18 years. We just purchased a new Melco AMAYA machine.

Trudy Hartman
The Winner's Circle,
Lockport, LA

Kudos to Stitches!

My husband and I have a small embroidery, rhinestone and heat-vinyl business that we started in 2013. We're both retired and hope to make this business work for us as a retirement income. Thanks so much for your great magazine.

Alison Robbins
A&H Embroidery Services LLC,
St. Peters, MO

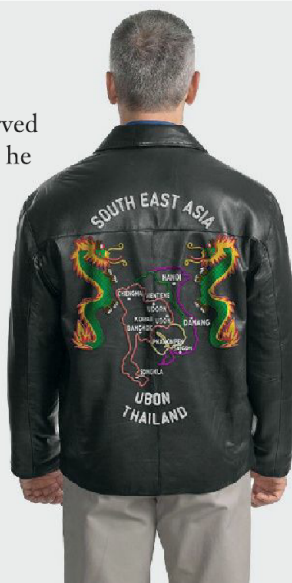


VOILA!

The best piece I ever embroidered

"We recently received an email from a 75-year-old veteran who served at the Ubon Royal Thai Air Force Base in the Vietnam War. While he was there, they had a local sewing store do a handmade embroidered jacket for them. So when the Ubon veterans were planning a reunion recently, they wanted to redo that historic jacket. The full back design featured two Vietnamese dragons and a map of the Ubon area. They gave us one of the original jackets, and we took it to our digitizer, who used Wilcom ES-65 designer software. We stitched them out on a Brother EMB machine with Marathon rayon thread. The whole group fell in love with them. We received phone calls from so many recipients telling us how much these jackets meant to them."

Submitted by Solomon Schwartz, creative design director at E Custom Wear Inc., Brooklyn, NY; sol@ecustomwear.com; www.ecustomwear.com



TALK TO US!

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



Craig Mertens, president of Digital Art Solutions (asi/14970), talks about implementing rhinestone design services, facing competition from overseas and current opportunities for decorators.

Think customization when working with rhinestones.

The popular trend now in rhinestone design is multi-decoration with heat-press vinyl. Glitter vinyl has become its own decorating category, and combining it with rhinestones is highly profitable and easy on the production side. Customization is essential to rhinestone multi-decoration. With a vinyl cutter, it's easy to add personalization or produce a spec sample, which is critical for potential clients. There's no substitute for letting them touch and feel a sample, especially if it's personalized.

You need the right tools and equipment before offering rhinestone decoration.

We focus on "ASSET," which is that artwork, software support, equipment and training equals success. All of these elements must be in balance for a client to succeed with rhinestone multi-decoration. There's a lot more to it than just buying a heat press and a vinyl cutter. There are many parallels between rhinestone multi-decoration and embroidery. Clients require supplies, stock patterns, keyboard type-able rhinestone fonts and most importantly software. We invented the process of creating a rhinestone heat transfer with a vinyl cutter in

2008. Having set up thousands of people in rhinestone decoration, we know that training is the single most important consideration when if you get involved with this decorating process.

Vinyl, heat press and rhinestones offer a variety of opportunities for decorators.

I don't believe there's a better investment in the apparel decoration industry than a vinyl cutter, heat press and rhinestone multi-decoration system. The cost of entry is minimal compared to other decorating processes, and the equipment is incredibly versatile. From rhinestone transfers and decals, to heat-press vinyl on light and dark garments, decorators can cover a wide gamut. It's also incredibly profitable. A multi-decoration T-shirt with glitter vinyl and rhinestones costs less than \$5 to produce, including all components and the shirt. Wholesale on this shirt is \$15 to \$18, and retail is \$25 to \$30. Add a second location and tag on another \$5 in profit. When we talk to embroiderers, we're generally shocked when they don't already own a cutter. Every embroiderer should own a cutter and heat press.

Decorators should have graphics software on-hand at all times for most client work.

“Having stock libraries of design templates, clip art, fonts and graphics tools is essential for anyone in the apparel decoration business.”

Craig Mertens, Digital Art Solutions

It's generally not cost-effective for decorators to create every graphic from scratch or out-source creative services. Owning a graphics software like CorelDRAW is a must. Having stock libraries of design templates, clip art, fonts and graphics tools is essential for anyone in the apparel decoration business. There are times when custom graphics are warranted, but only if the order quantities justify the time and expense. Successful decorators learn how to budget their time and charge appropriately for design services and graphics preparation.

Social media is imperative for marketing efforts.

Social media is an essential component of grassroots marketing. It's a highly effective way to engage potential clients and stay in contact with existing clients. Facebook is the easiest and the most effective form of free marketing. Posting samples on Instagram or Pinterest is an excellent way to create sales opportunities. Twitter can be an effective way

to reach existing clients, but it takes serious commitment.

Overseas competition is a phenomenon.

With the introduction of Alibaba to the U.S. marketplace, end-users can purchase factory-direct from China. Someone can order embroidered polo shirts with low minimums from China at a fraction of the price of U.S. decorators and have a quality product shipped within days. It's critical that domestic decorators build value with their creative services. This is the best insurance against predatory overseas competition. The days of "putting logos on stuff" are over. A constant flow of new graphics and ideas is an essential part of client retention. This is why we introduced our Campus Apparel Marketing System, which provides our subscribers with fresh new graphics every month that they can relay to clients or potential clients. Graphics are the great equalizer when competing against low-price competition.

INTERACT

Phil Stitch Answers



Got a question for Phil?

If you can't find what you're looking for in the 2015 Sourcing Guide, write to: *Stitches*, Attn: Phil Stitch, 4800 Street Rd., Trevoze, PA 19053. Or fax your question to (215) 953-3107. For the quickest response, email askphil@asicentral.com. For RN inquiries, visit www.stitches.com for the RN Database link.

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

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I'm searching for wholesale men's robes in hunter green. Any suggestions? - Barbara

Hunt for the Royal Comfort Bath Robe (RCBR) from Cotton Love LLC (asi/46756); (877) 986-9357; www.cotton-love.com; made of terry velour, this kimono-style robe is available in six colors including hunter green. Or, slip into the Turkish Signature Shawl Collar Robe (RW40) from Towel Specialties (asi/91605); (800) 938-6935; www.towelspecialties.com; consisting of 100% Turkish terry velour, this 48" robe features a shawl collar, double pockets and a belt. Finally, warm up with 20 Degrees Below (asi/92366); (800) 413-2129; www.20belowasi.com. This supplier carries a super-soft Unisex Fleece Bathrobe with Tie Belt (ROB151-ROBE), made in the USA of heavyweight polyester fleece with a velour finish.

Can you help me find men's short-sleeve compression shirts in royal blue? Thanks! - Hugh

Check out the Men's Short Sleeve Compression Crew T-Shirt (N3130) from A4 Moshay Inc. (asi/30121); (888) 464-3824; www.a4.com. With 80% polyester/20% spandex construction, the shirt features moisture-wicking, odor-resistant and stain-release properties, as well as four-way stretch moisture-management fabric.

Next, get fit with the B-Fit Adult Short Sleeve Compression Crew (BD4620) from Heritage Sportswear + Virginia T's (asi/60582); (800) 537-2222; www.heritagesportswear.com. Also consisting of poly/spandex moisture-management fabric, it's got

a self-fabric crew-neck collar, stretch body fit and double-needle hem with tack. A third option is the Compression Performance Jersey (227) from Ramco (asi/80630); (866) 516-2627; www.ramcoapparel.com; this 92% polyester/8% spandex moisture-wicking crew-neck tee is available in five colors, including royal.

My client needs tennis racquet covers for a college team. Know of any suppliers out there? - Yvette

I've got you covered. Head to Ame & Lulu (asi/35232); (617) 916-1755; www.ameandlulu.com; for the Racquet Cover (RC). Available in several designs, it measures 30" x 13" x 2 1/2" and features a zippered pocket for keys, a shoulder strap and enough room for two racquets. Alternately, zip over to Sport Systems Custom Bag Corp. (asi/88782); (800) 333-7225; www.sscbags.com; for the polyester Single Racquet Tennis Bag (832), which contains an easy-access zipper and adjustable shoulder strap and measures 28" x 11" x 1".

Last but not least, serve up the U.S. Open 2015 Tennis Racquet Bag (USO-PENRB) from Smart Play USA LLC (asi/87800); (252) 747-2587; www.smartplayusa.com. Measuring 29 1/2" x 13" x 4 1/2", it's large enough to hold three racquets and is available in a red/blue/gray U.S. Open design.

Please help! I need pinstripe baseball caps so I can hit a home run with my local league! - Gene

Get your game on with the Low Profile Pinstripe Cotton Washed Cap (6859) from Mega Cap Inc. (asi/70434); (888) 616-6342; www.megacapinc.com; this unstructured hat features an adjustable strap with Velcro and a faded, worn look. Or, round the bases with the FlexFit Pinstripe Cap (6195P) from Americana Sportswear (asi/35722); (562) 864-4242; www.americanasportswear.com; made

from a poly/spandex blend, this lightweight, fitted and structured cap has six panels and sewn eyelets.

Cap off your search with the Caliber Fashion Fabric Cap (435) from FITS

Accessories (asi/71107); (800) 205-0205; www.pedigree.ca. Constructed from polyester and rayon, this hard-front adult-size cap has a herringbone pinstripe design and a short fabric Velcro strap.



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Kornit Assists With Sustainable Fashion

Kornit Digital (asi/14972) and New York's Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) collaborated on a digital printing project, focused on local, sustainable short-run production.

The design challenge, in its second year, asked students at the State University of New York to create original designs. Each was printed on the Kornit Allegro roll-to-roll textile system, using Kornit's NeoPigment ink. The three winners – Hyuana Kim, Konchok Bercholz and Elena Kanagy-Loux – will have their fabrics replicated as fashion items that feature strong eco-awareness. Kornit's one-step print technology allows designers to see their creations immediately, with no minimum yardage requirements. It's an ideal solution for trending-on-demand, close-to-market,

short-run and local production and sampling.

"Our collaboration with FIT demonstrates an important example of how Kornit Digital can nurture the growth and developing expertise of tomorrow's designers with the help of technologies that are changing the way creativity is brought to life across all fabric types," says Merav Zimmerman, product marketing manager for the Allegro.

Kornit's collaboration with FIT is a unique way to show off the digital printing company's usefulness in sustainable fashion, according to Paul Borucki, managing director of Kornit Digital North America. "We see a growing demand worldwide for greater education into the potential for using more eco-friendly printing methods," he adds.

Embroidery Mart-NASHVILLE Set for August

The National Network of Embroidery Professionals (NNEP) is hosting Embroidery Mart-NASHVILLE in Tennessee on August 7 and 8 at the Music City Center in downtown Nashville. The show will feature more than 60 industry suppliers – from embroidery and other decorating equipment to apparel to software.

Embroidery Mart will also be chock-full of educational opportunities, including demonstrations of decorating equipment on the trade show floor. Classes will teach decorators pricing, sales and marketing, selling to teams/leagues, making money with transfers and more.

The day before the show starts – on August 6 – Larry Mays of Boardwalk Marketing will present a Growth Workshop for business owners

ready to take their shops to the next level. The workshop will outline dozens of categories where business is hiding and explain how to capture business many embroiderers thought was beyond their capabilities. Separate registration is required for this workshop.

Registration for Embroidery Mart is \$20 per person and covers both days at the trade show and all classes, except for the Growth Workshop, which costs \$49 per person. The NNEP encourages attendees to register in advance online at www.embroiderymart.com to avoid lines. NNEP membership isn't required to attend the show.

The NNEP is a trade association for embroidery and apparel decoration professionals, offering education, trade shows, preferred pricing from participating vendors and other perks. Visit www.nnep.com.

OTTO Now Offers Embroidery Thread

Apparel and headwear supplier OTTO International (asi/75350) is entering the thread business, with its new embroidery product line. Items include a high-speed performance polyester 40-weight thread, available in black and white in 5,500-yard cones. OTTO also now offers 100% polyester L-type pre-wound bobbins in black and white.

All embroidery products have been tested and inspected throughout production, according to the company. Products bear the Oeko-Tex 100 certification, an international testing and certification system for textiles that limits the use of certain chemicals.

"Our customers can enjoy the same benefits as our custom overseas production," says Jennifer Lee, vice president.

Event Calendar

July 14-16, Chicago
ASI Show
(800) 546-3300
www.asishow.com

Aug. 5-6, Long Beach, CA
The SAAC Show
(805) 484-7393
www.saac.net

Aug. 7-8, Nashville, TN
Embroidery Mart - NASHVILLE
(800) 866-7396
www.nnep.net

Aug. 12, Nashville, TN
PPAMS Nashville Road Show
(615) 465-8109
www.ppams.com

Aug. 13, Knoxville, TN
PPAMS Knoxville Road Show
(615) 465-8109
www.ppams.com

Aug. 19, Bloomington, MN
UMAPP Holiday Showcase & End Buyer Expo
(651) 734-9767
www.umapp.org

Aug. 29-Sept. 1
Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Fort Lauderdale Gift Show
(678) 285-3976
www.ftlauderdalegiftshow.com

Aug. 31-Sept 3, Boston; Long Island, NY; NY/NJ; Baltimore
ASI Roadshow
(800) 546-3300
www.asiroadshow.com

Indian Textiles on Display

A museum in Mumbai has opened up a permanent gallery to map the rich textile heritage of India. Thanks to a grant from the country's ministry of culture, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) museum was able to create a climate-controlled exhibit space to display fragile and historic textiles.

"In India, textiles are heirloom pieces, fragrant with memories," Manisha Nene, co-curator of the exhibition, told Indian newspaper *MID DAY*. "They form a part of various rituals in different communities, from birth to death." The textile gallery mirrors



that journey, Nene said, starting with a display of children's clothing.

Various types of regional embroidery techniques are featured, including the delicate flower and vine motifs made famous in the Kashmir region. Beadwork from India's Gujarat region was used to create everything

from hand fans to wall hangings. The gallery also explores how India's textiles were exported around the world. "India was like the Manchester of the East," Nene said.

The Met Displays China-Inspired Fashion

Embroidery has a starring role in the latest exhibit at the Costume Institute of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. "China: Through the Looking Glass," which runs until August 16, explores the impact of Chinese aesthetics on Western fashion and how China has fueled the fashionable imagination for centuries. The exhibit juxtaposes high fashion with Chinese costumes, paintings, porcelains and other art.

"From the earliest period of European contact with China in the 16th century, the West has been enchanted with enigmatic objects and imagery from the East, providing inspiration for fashion designers from Paul Poiret to Yves Saint Laurent, whose fashions are infused at



Part of Italian designer Valentino's 2013 "Shanghai" collection, this evening dress shows how Chinese aesthetics have affected Western fashion. It's part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Spring 2015 Costume Institute exhibit: "China: Through the Looking Glass." Photo: Platon, courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Photography.

every turn with romance, nostalgia and make-believe," says Andrew Bolton, curator.

Concerns that the premise of the exhibit, presenting an



This 19th century court robe from China's Qing dynasty is on display at "China: Through the Looking Glass," the spring 2015 exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute. Photo: Platon, courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Photography.

ancient culture as a Western fantasy, smacks of Orientalism and cultural appropriation are addressed. "While some may perceive an implicit power

Embroiderers Stitch Blanket Fit for Royalty

The U.K.'s newborn Princess Charlotte is getting a warm welcome to the world from her friends down under. The Australian government commissioned the ACT Embroiderer's Guild to hand-stitch the country's floral emblem – a golden wattle with a long leaf – onto a baby blanket made from Tasmanian merino wool.

It took the guild 200 hours to complete the design conceived by guild President Di Ballantyne. "The design brief was simple: Australian, local and as local as we could find," she says. The group sourced thread from Australia's Yass valley to help meet the terms of the brief. Typically, a commission like this would take the guild about six months to complete, Ballantyne told the *Canberra Times*. In this case, however, the stitchers only had one week to finish the blanket, which was then sent to the duke and duchess of Cambridge to mark the birth of their daughter.

imbalance in such costuming, designers are driven less by the logic of politics than by that of fashion, which is typically more concerned with an aesthetic of surfaces rather than the specifics of cultural context," reads a sign posted at the exhibit.

SALES

State Government Sample Show Lucrative

Marjorie Corrow, president of Life's a Stitch Embroidery in Niskayuna, NY, has created a comfortable niche selling Irish-themed apparel at festivals and her retail store Shamrock Chic. But she also pads her profits with a few typical corporate embroidery accounts, the most high-profile of which, she says, she “created out of thin air.”

Corrow used to run a vendor booth at a craft show in a concourse outside the New York state capitol building. Knowing that legislators and staffers regularly walked that path, she put out an embroidered sample of the New York state seal. Sure enough, it caught the eye of an assemblyman. That first sale morphed into an annual sample sale, where Corrow shows off an array of high-quality clothing – from aprons for legislators hosting pancake breakfasts to business attire to gift-appropriate accessories – all of which can be personalized and adorned with the state seal. Corrow says the one-day sample sale can bring in between \$2,000 and \$10,000, none of which, she notes, is paid for through state funds. “I’ve worked very, very hard with all of these guys,” Corrow says. “They’re very, very pleased with my quality.”



Bling Scores with Women in Motorcycle Club

To create fellowship and community, the nonprofit Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association (CVMA), with chapters in all 50 states, brings together combat veterans and their families for recreational motorcycle riding and to raise money for veteran care facilities. One chapter, 23-5 in Central Texas, recently searched for a decorator to provide them with embellished apparel for special events. The merchandise would benefit both the chapter and other veteran programs.

Last May, the chapter’s auxiliary commander Diane “Sauce” Trujillo came upon Sparkle Plenty Designs (asi/88442) in Philadelphia and reached out to co-owners Andrew and Lee Romano Sequeira regarding apparel for the female members. “When we finally came across Sparkle Plenty Designs,” Trujillo says,



“we had searched for some time to find someone who could work with us to embellish our shirts. We couldn’t be happier with the results.”

Sparkle Plenty put together tops with a design inspired by the organization’s national trademarked logo. Each of the 10 garments, including tank tops (3533) from Next Level Apparel (asi/73867), cotton T-shirts (2000L) from Gildan Activewear (asi/56842), ladies’ V-neck T-shirts (S04V) from Hanes/Champion (asi/59528) and fitted tees (6004) from Bella-Alo (asi/39590), was embellished with premium rhinestones.

“Wherever there’s a population of women within a business, social group, organization or team, bling will sell, period,” says Andrew Sequeira. “They love the finished look. Women make up a significant audience of different ethnicities, ages and interests, who are all prospective buyers if you present them with an example of this type of decoration.”

— Sara Lavenduski

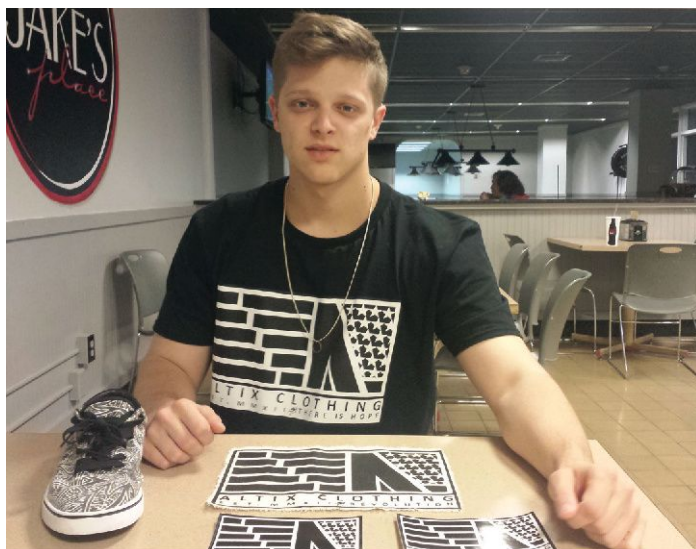
WEB

College Student Builds Brand Online

Kevin Ostromecki, 21, will be starting his senior year as a business and graphic design major at Albright College in Reading, PA, this fall, but he's already building a thriving custom apparel business, Altix Clothing. Always artistic, Ostromecki gained a following back in high school, when he hand-decorated canvas shoes with graffiti-like designs. When classmates started requesting shoes of their own, he realized the inherent business opportunity and ran with it.

Since then, Ostromecki expanded into screen printing, selling over a dozen original designs, but also creating custom apparel for clients like the Albright football team. Rather than getting a tee with a stock football design with the school's name above it, Ostromecki says he custom-designs a "cool shirt that students actually want to wear out."

Ostromecki attributes much of the fledgling brand's rapid growth to smart marketing on social media. The company regularly posts videos online and boasts thousands of followers on Twitter and Instagram. "Altix is here to change the world," Ostromecki says, adding that the brand is appealing to his peers because its message is "genuine, authentic and real."



College senior Kevin Ostromecki is building his custom apparel brand, Altix Clothing, while still carrying a full load of courses.

SALES

Rodeo Brings Ample Opportunity to Sell

There's nothing quite like the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, the world's largest livestock exhibition and live entertainment event. The massive event held in downtown Houston each spring boasts 20 days of rodeos, concerts, pig racing, shopping, livestock auctions and more. In 2013, the event hosted over 2 million people and almost 30,000 volunteers.

Before the official start of the event, a pre-party of over 300 teams convenes for the three-day World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest. Barbecue connoisseurs from across the state go head-to-head to cook the tastiest meal, and attendees enjoy delicious food and dancing.

For the past several years, Jane Swanzy, owner of Houston-based Swan Marketing LLC and a long-time show volunteer, has embroidered aprons for Half-Fast Cookers, one of the competing teams. Tuan "Tuna" Nguyen had decided to resurrect his father-in-law's cook-off team, and as a fellow volunteer, knew about Swanzy's embroidery work.

"They came to me asking if I would decorate their items," Swanzy says. "In exchange for my decorating, I'm an official team



sponsor, so I get free food and drink during cook-off time. Their primary objective was to look professional on a small budget."

Swanzy took the team's original 1970s logo, and continues to embroider it on button-down shirts as well as Port Authority full-length aprons (A500) from SanMar (asi/84863) each year. For the aprons, she sticks with black for one basic reason: "There's no way they can keep from getting barbeque sauce on their clothes." — SL

DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Five Steps
By Tonia Kimbrough

Create Memorable Commemorative Apparel

By mixing media – water-based ink and foil imprints – you can create a unique commemorative shirt.

STEP 1. Know your demographic.

For a commemorative fashion event, Rowboat Creative (asi/313715) chose a soft garment and a water-based printing technique to achieve a no-hand feel on the print. Joe Zangrilli, owner/head of production at Rowboat, used Rutland water-based inks and tinting system.

STEP 2. Print quickly. With water-based production, you have to move fast. Ensure your screens are coated with a water-resistant emulsion so the screens don't break down during production. Zangrilli's pick: Kiwo Polycol Discharge Emulsion (with Diazo D additive).

STEP 3. Add an accent. A plastisol foil adhesive is placed last in the production line to add the foil accents in the jewelry and overall design. (Heat-transfer foil won't stick to water-based ink.) Zangrilli's pick: International Coatings Plastisol Foil Adhesive 3801.

STEP 4. Flash cure. Place a flash just before the foil adhesive screen in your production line to ensure the water-based ink isn't further muted during production. This will also help prevent the plastisol adhesive and water-based ink from contaminating each other.

STEP 5. Apply foil. Gold heat-transfer foil was applied using a pneumatic semi-auto heat press. The foil is pre-cut to the proper imprint size and laid on top of the imprint area. The foil is pressed for 10 seconds at 330 degrees Fahrenheit with medium pressure.

TIPS: Keep a spray bottle of water to mist the print area of the screen in the event of a production pause. Have spare garments on hand to keep the screens printing while you address any production pauses or related issues. This will help with keeping the screens open and unclogged.

ROWBOAT CREATIVE (ASI/313715);
CIRCLE 76 ON FREE INFO CARD.

Cool With Caps

The summer sun makes caps all the more useful promotional gift or uniform accessory. Yet you can't let function outweigh design. Just over 40% of U.S. consumers who keep a cap do so because it's attractive, according to ASI's 2014 Global Advertising Specialties Impressions report. Consider your options when decorating a cap.

"Embroidery is always best when it comes to a six-panel cap, which is the most popular style of hat," says Mitchell Krakower vice president of Hackensack, NJ-based Topwear International (asi/91430). "This is because there's a seam in the front and printing doesn't always line up well. Of course if the logo is very intricate or it's a picture, printing or sublimation can be better in that case, but you might be better off switching to a five-panel cap." Of course, you can also choose to go custom. Krakower says decorating before the cap is constructed allows for greater choice of decorative options and a higher quality finish.

Though the most popular form of decoration is embroidery, there are many choices in style of embroidery, according to Catherine Epstein, business development manager of Champlain, NY-based Fersten Worldwide (asi/53974): "Flat and 3-D embroidery are the most popular. Depending on the logo, we also see increased demand for light back fill embroidery, 3-D puff with bean stitching, 3-D puff outline embroidery and crisscross embroidery. After embroidery, it's laser etching, which on headwear is fabric- and color-dependent and can't be done on all headwear styles and colors."

Talk to your cap provider to learn what decorative options would be best for your project.



FERSTEN WORLDWIDE INC. (ASI/53974); CIRCLE 77 ON FREE INFO CARD.



TOPWEAR INTERNATIONAL (ASI/91430); CIRCLE 78 ON FREE INFO CARD.

Brighten Up Embroidery

Looking to warm up an embroidered design? Think hot shades of color. For a durable thread with a super bright shine, Robison-Anton Super Brite Polyester has a high tensile strength with a sheen similar to rayon. Offered by American Embroidery Supply, this is 120 denier two-ply 40-weight thread that's designed to work with an 11.75 needle.

No worries about the sun washing out this thread's color. Super Brite Polyester is color-fast and holds up to everyday wear and tear and laundering. Thread colors can be matched to 450 Pantone licensed colors so you can accommodate logo colors for any client.

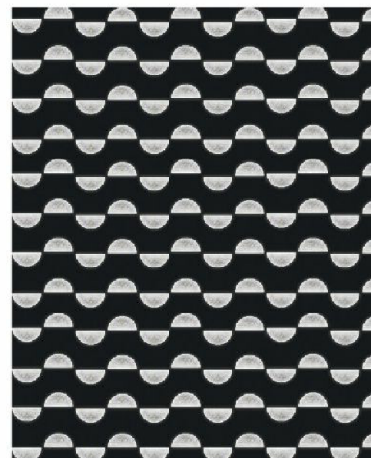


AMERICAN EMBROIDERY SUPPLY; CIRCLE 79 ON FREE INFO CARD.

Go Glam With Glitz

Looking for bling with a twist? Dalco now offers a unique appliqué material called Jackpot Glitz, made of black 92% polyester/8% spandex. The "glitz" comes from a pattern of alternating half-moon crescents made of a reflective silver material. These crescents catch and reflect back light to create a shimmering effect when moved.

It's a great choice for markets that love bling such as cheerleading, dance, skating, gymnastics, spiritwear and women's fashion. This material comes in rolls, pre-cut in any stock shape or letter, or custom-cut to your specifications. It has a heat-seal adhesive backing, making it easy to tack in place before sewing to ensure it stays in place.



DALCO ATHLETIC; CIRCLE 80 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 288-3252.

DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Machine & Software Updates

Sublimate Like a Fashion Designer

Let your inner fashion designer come out. With sublimation, the design possibilities are practically endless. The Epson SureColor F-Series dye-sublimation printing technology provides fashion and textile designers an accessible means to bring their ideas and inspiration to life. The high-speed, affordable SureColor F-Series printers produce sharp, vivid images with vibrant colors, intense blacks and smooth gradations onto fabric – enabling designers to create and print original designs with greater control and flexibility.

Agustin Chacon, vice president of subsidiary sales and operations at Epson America Inc., explains, “Epson’s dye-sublimation printing technology provides another level of creativity and functionality for young fashion entrepreneurs and well-established fashion brands looking to produce their art in a more efficient and affordable manner.”

In particular, the Epson SureColor F7170 is designed and manufactured by Epson from the ground up. With its newly optimized Epson MicroPiezo TFP print head designed for Epson UltraChrome DS ink,



EPSON AMERICA INC.; CIRCLE 81 ON FREE INFO CARD.

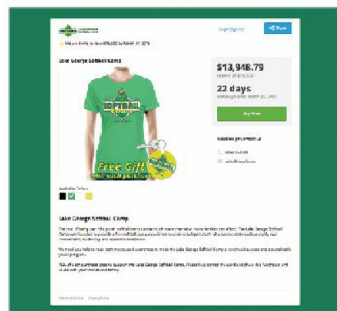
users can expect exceptional reliability and industrial-level production. The SureColor F7170 64-inch printer supports an extensive range of applications, including efficient production of high-quality sportswear and apparel, as well as high end fashion designs. To learn more, visit www.proimaging.epson.com.



Do You Have a Reciprocity Strategy?

If you don’t, it’s easy to create reciprocity. Nonprofits and other organizations have long used free gifts as a reward or incentive to encourage donations. The idea is that giving something establishes an obligation on the part of the recipient to give something in return. This reciprocity strategy translates easily to online fundraising.

A printing business can leverage it to boost fundraising results by using low-cost promotional items or easy-to-print products as a free gift, the value of which can be tied to the amount of the donation. The cost of such gifts is offset by increased sales of the primary fundraising product. To see examples of various ways to leverage reciprocity in your fundraising Web stores, go to www.inksoft.com/increase-fundraising-results.



INKSOFT; CIRCLE 82 ON FREE INFO CARD.

Top Off Caps With Heat-Printing Tips

The experts at Hotronix highlight the ease of decorating a cap via heat printing. By using a heat press, designs can be applied to the front, back, brim or side of a cap. The key is to use the right size platen for the cap you’re heat printing. These will vary slightly depending on the style of cap. Equally important is making sure the platen is compatible with the heat press.

A low-profile cap, such as a visor, has a print area that is approximately 2 ¾” x 6 ½”. Caps with a low crown are 3” x 5 ¾”, while full-front crown style caps are slightly larger measuring 4” x 6 ½”. Foam-front caps have the largest print area at 4” x 8 ¾”.

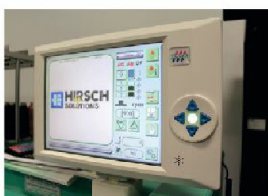
To learn more about decorating caps visit www.hotronix.com/how-to-decorate-caps-heat-press.



HOTRONIX; CIRCLE 83 ON FREE INFO CARD.

Save 40,000,000 Stitches

Increase your capacity to save designs and improve efficiency with Tajima's TMAR-KC embroidery machine from Hirsch



HIRSCH INTERNATIONAL; CIRCLE 84 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 394-4426.

International. Its touch-screen control panel sets it apart from other equipment, providing an intuitive, easy-to-use interface that makes it simple for newcomers to learn how to operate the machine while reducing operator error and confusion.

In addition with this high-tech control panel, the operator can view a design as its sewing and do manual color changes and thread trims. Its memory holds more than average with the capacity to save 40,000,000 stitches, which equals approximately 650 designs.

Quick Tips



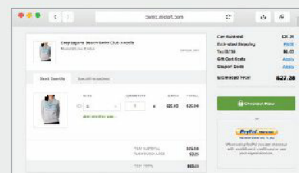
FLORIANI COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS; CIRCLE 85 ON FREE INFO CARD.

TIP: Keep fabric pieces from folding over and getting caught under the needle. Use Floriani Commercial's Embroidery Perfection Tape. It assists by holding back most fabrics without leaving residue on the hoop, machine or fabric.



HOTRONIX; CIRCLE 83 ON FREE INFO CARD.

TIP: Expand the placement options you can offer customers when heat pressing. Use Hotronix sleeve and pant leg heat-press platen, compatible with all models of Hotronix Fusion heat presses. View a short video demonstrating how to decorate sleeves and pant legs of apparel quickly and easily with this optional heat press platen. Go to www.hotronix.com and select "Educational Videos" under the "Learn About Heat Presses" tab.



INKSOFT; CIRCLE 82 ON FREE INFO CARD.

TIP: Increase customer satisfaction by adding PayPal to checkout. Those with an InkSoft Web store can add PayPal to their checkout options. InkSoft makes it easy to add both PayPal Express Checkout and PayPal Pro to your Web store. Contact the InkSoft support team at (800) 410-3048, ext. 1.

PRODUCT PICK

Take a quick look at what's new in Total Control U, the updated version of Floriani Software's popular digitizing program offered by Floriani Commercial. A useful video just released showcases a spectrum of new features developed in response to users' requests. For example, it introduces additional tools for embossing and enhanced features such as single continuous-line stippling and the ability to change spacing in between motifs. You can also learn about new lettering aids, including a special menu with fonts especially suited to monogramming and complementary decorations, vertical baseline paths and the ability to put letters above, below and centered on a single circle, at the same time.



FLORIANI COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS; CIRCLE 85 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL 865-549-5115.

PRODUCT PICK

Premium 2.5-oz. cutaway from Cotswold Industries offers optimal stability because it's a "wet-laid" soft, dense non-directional nonwoven. One layer is all you need to match the stitch count and density with the weight and stretch of your material. The 2.5-oz. weight is recommended for approximately 20,000 stitches in a moderately dense design.



COTSWOLD INDUSTRIES; CIRCLE 86 ON FREE INFO CARD.

TONIA KIMBROUGH IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO *STITCHES*.

Look Book

Trend Alerts

By Patricia Cangelosi

APPAREL

Dark Florals

Floral patterns aren't a new concept, but as designers reinvent and re-imagine them, flowers continue to claim their place in high fashion as well as the promotional industry. "Florals are a classic motif that everyone understands, but as a designer, one can update them in many ways to be fresh for any taste level or aesthetic," says designer Mariana Leung, founder and editor of *Ms. Fabulous Media*. "If a graphic designer is creating floral prints, they can be scaled to suit any look and re-colored for the trendiest color palette."

For example, Leung points out, bold, large-scale patterns would be perfect for a casual dress, while abstract florals in innovative materials make for a more contemporary, edgy look. Her advice to decorators and industry salespeople: "The beauty of the floral pattern itself is your best sales tool."

In addition, you could show clients how patterns incorporate up-to-date color trends or mention how universally flattering the pattern might be to the end-user. Plus, florals pair so well with many wardrobe staples, and with a great scope of designs and materials out there, they're available at any price point your client is willing to pay.



Check out the Satin Tapestry Newsboy Cap (2121) from Mega Cap Inc. (asi/70434; circle 87 on Free Info Card). With an elastic back closure, it's made of satin and available in four colors.



Style it up with this Lightweight Scarf with Floral Pattern (SU-AWJ9-9) from Assertive Creativity (asi/37166; Circle 88 on Free Info Card), made of viscose and measuring 72" x 44".

Say aloha to the Men's Hawaiian Style Camp Shirt (0700-FT) from Fast Lane Clothing Co. (asi/53753; circle 89 on Free Info Card), made with 100% soft and breezy cotton and coconut buttons, from the Toucan Dance Collection.



Get the Allie Tote (11169) from McKlein Co. (asi/70053; circle 90 on Free Info Card); measuring 15 1/2" x 4" x 13 1/2", this quilted fabric tote with croc faux leather features double top handles, an exterior zip pocket and top zip closure.



►Sporting the dark floral look from head to toe, a model walks at the Giambattista Valli Paris show during Paris Fashion Week.

PHOTO: CATWALKING

EMBELLISHMENT

Metallic Accents

Bright, shiny and attention-grabbing, metallic accents are guaranteed to get noticed on promotional apparel and accessories. “Anything metallic adds another dimension that automatically draws the eye, making the piece much more interesting,” says Shurli Allinott, president of Brandwear (asi/41545). Think zippers, buttons, gold or silver threads, foils and studs. Consider the logo and the occasion when deciding whether metallic accents are the best way to go. High-energy events like car races or new product rollout parties would benefit from added pizzazz.

According to Joyce Modglin, trend research specialist at Outdoor Cap Co. (asi/75420), “Metallics are often associated with wealth, and there’s a large section of people that like to emulate wealth. However, on the other end of the spectrum, there’s the opposite culture that wants to show or emulate mutilated wealth, and they tend to embrace crackled or spray-printed metallics.”

From a promotional standpoint, she says, metallic embellishments are attractive to all product categories and demographics. Consider individual clients and the messages they’re trying to convey to determine whether metallic would help their brand shine.



Glam it up with the Ogio Glam Ladies’ Polo (LOG105) from SanMar (asi/84863; circle 91 on Free Info Card), constructed from 100% double-knit poly mesh with wicking technology and featuring open-hem cuffs with debossed metal snaps.



Check out the Ogio Ladies’ Melrose Tote (414006) from SanMar (asi/84863; circle 91 on Free Info Card), featuring large metal buttons on the front, padded tech compartments, three side flap pockets and a removable decorative belt.



The Kati Structured Mid-Profile Cap (9223) from Kati Sportcap & Bag (asi/64140; circle 92 on Free Info Card) is made of brushed heavy twill with mid-profile, six-panel construction. Available in one size and 12 colors.

► Large metallic buttons add shimmer to the Vawk fall 2015 collection during World MasterCard Fashion Week at David Pecaut Square in Toronto, Ontario.



PHOTO: GEORGE PIMENTEL



Get the Kati Brushed Cotton Twill Cap (A130) from Kati Sportcap & Bag (asi/64140; circle 92 on Free Info Card); features a low-profile, pre-curved visor and cotton sweatband for comfort; it’s made of brushed cotton twill.

Look Book

COLOR

Pantone's Amethyst Orchid

A shade fit for a king or queen, Amethyst Orchid is a gorgeous jewel tone – a pleasing interplay of poise and playfulness. “Purple and lavender hues can be found in popular flowers like lilacs, hydrangeas, irises and wisteria,” says Danny Tsai, vice president of merchandising for Tri-Mountain (asi/92125). Colors that pair well with it, according to Tsai, include pastels, deep raspberry, violet, fuchsia, lavender, khaki and light green, many of which also evoke images of plant life, abundance and growth.

When deciding on decoration pick a complementary color for the decoration that helps the logo stand out. “Color, along with new styles, is a great way to earn respect as a salesperson,” says Glen Brumer, sales director at Royal Apparel (asi/83731). “Newness sells. It’s usually the first thing a client wants to see, what’s trending and new.”

Charities and spirit/awareness events gravitate toward purple apparel, Brumer says, so it’s smart to bring samples when meeting nonprofit and cause-driven groups. Remind them that richness of spirit, the environment and – with a little help from you, their financial state – all resides in this color gem.



Tri-Mountain (asi/92125; Circle 93 on Free Info Card) offers the Layla Women's Short Sleeve Sweater (LB921), 100% cotton with a rib-knit trim along its one-button Y-collar, cuffs and bottom.



Get the Next Level CVC Crew (6610) from Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788; circle 94 on Free Info Card), made from 60% combed ringspun cotton/40% polyester jersey with a slightly heathered look and a 1x1 baby rib-knit set-in collar.



The Eco Tri-Blend Circle Scarf (32000) from Royal Apparel (asi/83731; circle 95 on Free Info Card) is made of 50% recycled RPET polyester/37% organic cotton/13% rayon with a soft hand; it measures 60" to 70" in circumference x 26" long.

► This model showed off an **Amethyst Orchid sweater** at Missoni's show during Milan Fashion Week.



Consisting of 60% cotton/40% polyester heathered jersey slub fabric, the Ladies' Twisted Slub Long Sleeve Jersey Hood (8263) from J America (asi/62977; circle 96 on Free Info Card) features a V-neck and extended length self-fabric cuffs.



PHOTO: VICTOR BOYKO



Check out the Eco Tri-Blend Scoop Neck (32112) from Royal Apparel (asi/83731; circle 95 on Free Info Card); consisting of 50% recycled RPET polyester/37% organic cotton/13% rayon, it features a double-needle sleeve hem and double-needle bottom hem.

Showcase: Woven Shirts

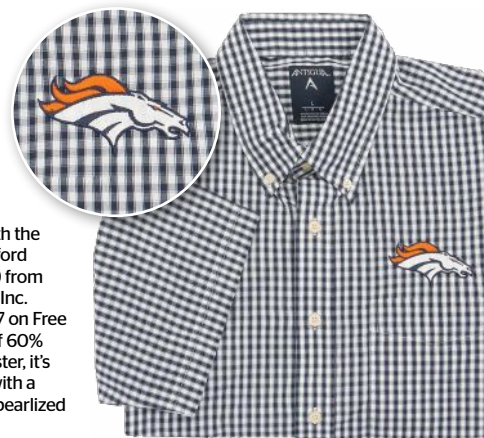
“Woven shirts are super trendy right now,” says Kirsten King, sales executive at alphabroder (asi/34063), “and with many different patterns and cuts to choose from, there’s a style for everyone.” As with everything else, consider the end-user. A clean, crisp classic look might appeal to a slightly older demographic, King notes, while a more modern, active cut with a bolder pattern will likely appeal to a younger audience.

And when it comes to decorating woven shirts, keep an open mind. “The standard decoration method for a woven is typically embroidery,” King says. “However, using the heat-seal technique with customers who may have a difficult logo to embroider on a woven can also turn out great.”

It doesn’t hurt to consider alternate locations for embellishment. “Decorate a piece or two and show unique decoration locations to your customers – such as embroidery at the nape of the neck or a heat-seal on the bicep – as it doesn’t always have to be a standard left-chest logo,” King says. “This will really make you stand out as the decorator of choice.”



Keep it smooth with the Men’s Pinpoint Oxford No Iron Shirt (1501) from Executive Apparel Inc. (asi/53418; circle 97 on Free Info Card). Made of 60% cotton/40% polyester, it’s wrinkle-resistant with a patch pocket and pearlized buttons.



The Scholar (100877) men’s button-down top from Antigua Group Inc. (asi/36320; circle 98 on Free Info Card) is a 60% cotton/40% polyester shirt with a plaid pattern, full-bottom front, self-fabric chest pocket and open cuff.

Vantage Apparel (asi/93390; Circle 99 on Free Info Card) carries this Easy Care Gingham Check Shirt (1107), consisting of 60% cotton/40% polyester and featuring a button-down collar and left-chest patch pocket.



The Focus (100544) men’s woven shirt from Antigua Group Inc. (asi/36320; circle 98 on Free Info Card) consists of 60% cotton/40% polyester with a mini check design and self-fabric chest pocket, cuffs, collar and tail bottom.



Check out the Devon & Jones Men’s Crown Collection Glen Plaid shirt (DG520) from alphabroder (asi/34063; circle 106 on Free Info Card), made of 55% cotton/45% polyester with wrinkle-free and stain-release technology.

Look Book

Niche: Kids' Team Sports/ Spiritwear

When it comes to teamwear and spiritwear for youth, well, as the saying goes, go big or go home. Oversized prints are popular with the younger crowd, according to Sherri McCarrell, marketing director of Boxercraft (asi/41325). Puff inks and prints and distressed graphics, rhinestones and glitter flake heat transfers are strong sellers, too. She recommends having a variety of sizes on-hand because supporters of all ages crave branded spiritwear. "Having youth and adult sizing available allows you to cover a wide range of sizes to accommodate a 'team,'" McCarrell says. "Also, this helps the younger market have garments that look more like teen and young adult apparel."

When it comes to color, says Deanna Miller, senior marketing manager at LAT Apparel (asi/65948), "The majority of sales are done in the basic team colors: red, royal, navy, black, heather and white. Athletic heather tends to be a universal team color. We're also seeing more secondary colors in team/youth merchandise such as purple, orange and Kelly green." According to Miller, styles that are popular with youth teams include "the classic, vintage look," as well as lighter-weight tees. Get in the game with these trendy must-haves on every young athlete's wish list.



The Preppy Patch Tee (YT66MGR) from Boxercraft (asi/41325; circle 100 on Free Info Card) is a fitted, 60% cotton/40% poly slub tee with trendy contrasting elbow patches.



Score prospects' attention with the Youth Reversible Moisture Management Muscle (NB2320) from A4 Moshay Inc. (asi/30121; circle 101 on Free Info Card). Made of 100% polyester interlock, it features a two-color side panel on both sides, plus performance properties for the wearer's comfort.



Channel your inner athlete with the Sporty Slub Tee (YT62) from Boxercraft (asi/41325; circle 100 on Free Info Card). With a V-neck and 60% cotton/40% poly slub jersey, it comes in adult and youth sizes.



This Youth Warp Knit Baseball Jersey (NB4214) from A4 Moshay Inc. (asi/30121; circle 101 on Free Info Card) is made of 100% polyester warp knit and features moisture-wicking, odor-resistant and stain-resistant properties.



LAT Apparel (asi/65948; circle 102 on Free Info Card) offers the Infant Football Bodysuit (4437), 60% combed ringspun cotton/40% polyester with contrast stripes on the sleeves. It's CPSIA compliant and available in sizes 6M, 12M, 18M and 24M.



Available from A4 Moshay Inc. (asi/30121; circle 101 on Free Info Card), the Youth Football Game Jersey (NB4136) has a 100% polyester mesh body with 100% polyester dazzle trim. Includes moisture-wicking, odor-resistant and stain-release technology.

Inspiration: Brant Torres

Creativity and loss are like feathers on a bird: they overlap, brush against each other, mirror each other's movements and, at times, look and feel identical.

Brant Torres, assistant professor in the University of San Francisco's Department of English, traces much of his artistic expression to the passing of his mother. A painter, knitter, weaver and embroiderer, Torres recalls the woman who inspired him: "My mother was a very talented artist who wasn't able to finish her art degree in college and later became a police officer. But her artistic energy moved into cross-stitch and embroidery."

Growing up, he saw her artwork throughout the house, and he sees his home today as a place to beautify with art. "We need to reclaim the domestic space as a place where art can exist in a very real and legitimate way," he says.

Currently, Torres is working with pattern design and experimentation on knit fabrics. "I've also been working on weaving as a way to think of different ways to make a canvas for needlework," he says. "While I started off mostly with embroidery from patterns, I've been trying to venture out into projects that allow for original design."

Follow Torres' blog for updates: <https://bredux.wordpress.com>.



This tea towel reflects, in stitches, a watercolor and ink painting (also pictured) that Brant Torres also created. He emphasizes the importance of having art in the home, just as he observed his mother's creative work. "I loved that my mother's hand could be seen throughout our home: from the stenciling in the kitchen, to the hand-sewn curtains, to cross-stitching our Christmas stockings and tapestry-sized artwork, to painting a mural of clouds in my room, canning fruits and hand-making Halloween costumes," he recalls.

Torres' watercolor and ink painting preceded the tea towel with a similar design. "The shapes in the painting and the color tones were inspired by a tarot deck that my mother had," he says.



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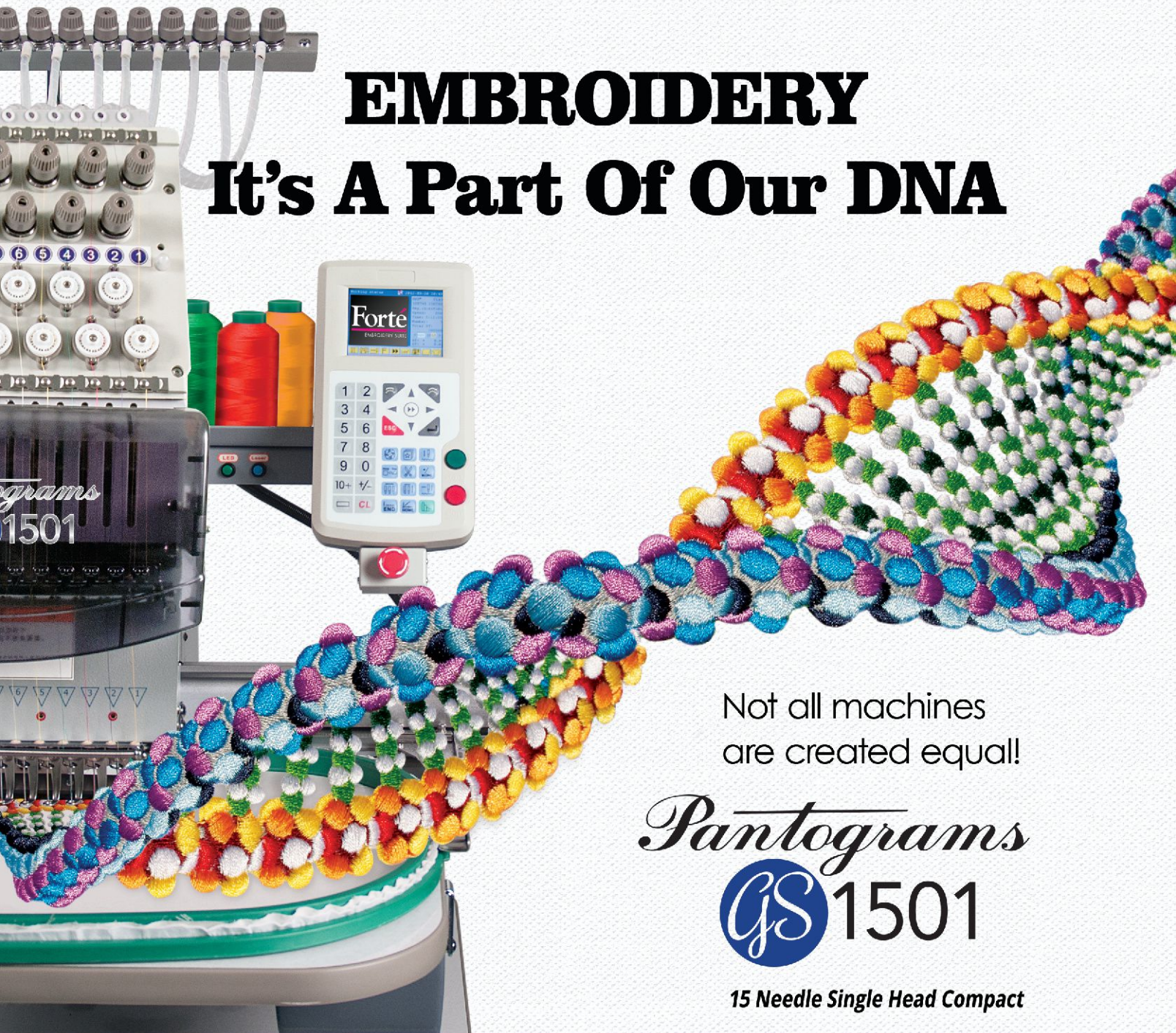
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GETTING PERSONAL

Large retail brands have embraced the personalization trend, thanks to software that makes mass customization both scalable and profitable. Already firmly ensconced in the world of custom apparel, decorators can still learn from their example.

By Theresa Hegel

What's better than a hat bearing your favorite sports team's logo? How about that same cap with your name emblazoned across the back? Or perhaps the years the team won a championship embroidered on the side? A mall fixture, LIDS has become almost synonymous with the idea of retail personalization – its customers tempted away from their department store destinations by the novelty of having their initials stitched for posterity onto one of 14,000 hat styles. Kent Haffner, director of retail customization for LIDS Sports Group, likens the whirl of the embroidery machine – strategically planted in the front of each shop – to the irresistible aroma of gourmet cookies or but-

tered popcorn at other specialty mall stores. "It's a form of retail entertainment," he explains. "The customers can see what's going on here. That's kind of our draw to get them in the stores."

It's a strategy that seems to be working. LIDS launched in-store, while-you-wait embroidery at 12 locations in the early 2000s. Now, the sports apparel giant has embroidery services in the vast majority of its stores, and custom jerseys available in 121 locations. "We take your order, and 15 to 20 minutes later, you walk out with your customized cap," Haffner says, adding that it's what sets LIDS apart from competitors. "Even in locations that don't have embroidery, customers are coming in and asking for it."

Consumers who expect lightning-quick delivery and the ability to put their stamp on any product aren't just a LIDS phenomenon. Anywhere you look, customization is king: from personalized soda bottles to sneakers tricked-out with Instagram pics. "People want to stand out and be distinct," says JP Hunt, vice president of InkSoft, which creates e-commerce and design software for decorators. Technological advances of the last few years have allowed them to do just that. Mass customization is not only possible, but has become very profitable, and retail brands have been quick to latch on.

Apparel decorators, of course, are no strangers to custom work, and are in an ideal position to benefit from this ubiquitous trend. But those who haven't invested in an e-commerce solution with an interactive online design component or software that enables streamlined, scalable, error-free personalization could be left in the dust. "Customers have these expectations that they should be able to interact with a website," Hunt says. "That expectation is increased when you're a printing business. If they can't see the products

you offer and can't put a design onto it, that's a real misalignment."

Decorators should be mirroring what retailers are doing, to stay competitive in an increasingly me-centric world, according to Hunt and other technology experts.

A Simple Solution

As a mall store with a high employee turnover rate, LIDS is in a different situation than many custom embroidery shops out there, and Haffner says his company needed a software solution that acknowledged those differences. In the early days of customization, LIDS was using a fairly complex digitizing program, and training was a big challenge. The company turned to Pulse Microsystems to create a template-based program for embroidery design. "They want to make sure that it doesn't matter what store you walk into, you're going to walk out with the same quality hat," says Brian Goldberg, Pulse president.

Thanks to the customized, intuitive software, LIDS has been able to cut down employee training by a whole day, Haffner says. "Most employees can come in and click, click, click to create a design fairly simply. ... It helps with efficiency."

Though that program was specifically tailored to LIDS' needs, Pulse offers a retail embroidery solution for other shops called Autograph. The idea is to give lower-level, transitional staff the ability to create error-free artwork with very little training, Goldberg says. "It's not as free-ranging as a general-purpose embroidery system," he adds. "You're restricted in what you can do intentionally. ... [Autograph] allows the retailer to choose what templates the staff person is going to be able to use. They're controlling the results and getting consistent results."

Name-Checked Fashion

Stepping out of the mall and onto the runway, personalization remains paramount. Last year, rag & bone sent its models down the catwalk in varsity jackets with their own names stitched in looping '50s-style letters across the back. Fashion bloggers salivated over that custom flourish in the greaser-chic collection, and for a limited time, rag & bone replicated the runway look for customers, embroidering names of up to seven letters on women's jackets, men's bowling shirts and other select items.



Say My Name

Mass-market retailers have latched onto the idea that people want to stand out and feel special. From shoes to soda, the list of consumer goods that include the option for personalization continues to grow.

Sharing Success: Last summer, Coca-Cola ran a popular "Share a Coke" campaign, manufacturing a limited run of coke bottles, bearing people's names on the iconic red-and-white labels. The company is expanding the marketing ploy this year. In addition to sending bottles bearing 1,000 of the most popular names into stores across the country, the company is adding an e-commerce component, allowing consumers with less-common monikers to order personalized 8-ounce bottles online at shareacoke.com.

Custom Kicks: The Nike iD site allows consumers to choose colors and designs for each part of the sneaker, from the sole to the lace. Shoppers can add their names or another message to the shoe's tongue. Adidas took customization a step further last year, when it introduced an application that lets customers use their own Instagram photos to decorate select shoe styles.

In the Bag: Mars hits the sweet spot of personalization with its mymms.com website. Shoppers can choose the base colors of the candy-coated chocolates, adding personal messages, clip art or uploading their own photos to be printed on the beloved candies.

Pop Art: Kellogg's allows customers to put their photo, along with a special message on certain boxes of Pop-Tarts, cereal and other products, at its online store.

“I think people have so much control over various aspects of their lives right now. Everyone is living in the public eye.”

Meredith Finkelstein, Print All Over Me

Adding a monogram or name to a high-end garment evokes a special sort of feeling, says Marcus Andrews, creator of the M Andrews Sartorial Luxury Collection, a custom menswear brand in San Antonio, TX. His company sells cut-to-order suits and shirts, and nearly every customer opts to add a monogram to the dress shirts they purchase. “It’s like a visual confirmation that they have something made just for them,” Andrews says.

Not to get too philosophical, but what’s in a name? For luxury fashion brand Burberry, the answer is \$100. That’s about how much the designer tacks onto the bill when online customers add a three-letter monogram to one of its signature scarves. “I think most of our customers would die for that kind of margin,” Goldberg says. Pulse designed Burberry’s online personalization engine, offering customers a simple, clean way to add a touch of customization – their initials stitched in the font and thread color of Burberry’s choosing – without diluting or cheapening the brand.

Burberry, trading on its high-end reputation, may be an exception when it comes to profit margins for personalization, but done right, adding a monogram or name to a garment is high margin for any decorator. “You’re putting three letters on a garment for a customer willing to pay \$10 to \$20 for something that costs you hopefully very little,” Goldberg says.

The trick when it comes to affordable personalization, he adds, has been scale. “The problem that larger manufacturers faced in the past was if they had double the number of personalization orders, they needed double the number of machines and staff,” he adds. “That’s not



scale. Proportional growth in expenses is not a way to make money.” Pulse solved that issue for Burberry and other brands with its automation software PulseID, which eliminates the need for manual order entry and machine setup. “I think that’s sort of the magic potion that they were looking for. ... We’ve seen a massive reduction in labor costs because operators are handling more machines now and are able to produce more on those machines,” he adds.

The Custom Web

With the rise of social media, consumers have become accustomed to curating and customizing their online identities. “People have so much control over various aspects of their lives right now,” says entrepreneur Meredith Finkelstein. “Everyone is living in the public eye.” The next step, she adds, is to translate that customer’s online persona into the physical world. That’s the idea behind Print



All Over Me (printallover.me), the online apparel company she helped launch a little over a year ago.

Print All Over Me designs the clothing silhouettes and fabrics, and users can upload their own designs and photographs to be digitally printed on fabric, then cut and sewn into the style of their choice. “We’re breaking down the barriers between what it means to be the designer and the consumer,” Finkelstein says.

One of the underpinnings of Print All Over Me’s success is how simple it is. Consumers don’t have to have a lot of technical know-how to feel creative. Tailoring shoppers’ online design experience is often key to increasing e-commerce sales, Goldberg says. “When you provide an open-ended design tool, the closure rate is low because most people aren’t artistic, though they want to be creative,” he adds. “You have to drive that creativity somehow in order to get a successful result.” Pulse uses a template-based system, where end-users

“I think [personalization is] going to continue to grow in terms of mass media and mass consumer products. People expect it, and they want it. That’s been heard loud and clear.”

JP Hunt, InkSoft

make choices, adding their names and editing designs created by professionals with artistic flair.

But even truly creative consumers were daunted by the prospect of creating custom clothing before online designers and digital printing blossomed, says Donny Michel, owner of four-year-old, Web-based Smurk Creative Apparel. “Before, it was always the traditional way of ordering – the minimum charges and setup fees – that stopped people,” he says. Artists and band members, he adds, didn’t have the cash flow to order dozens of shirts upfront. “I wanted to disrupt the apparel decorating industry in a good way,” Michel says.

Powered by DecoNetwork, Smurk allows customers, artistic or not, to choose from one of over 1,000 stock templates

to edit, or upload art from Facebook and Instagram. The company doesn’t charge setup or minimum fees, printing items on demand and allowing customers to set up online stores featuring their own shirt designs. “They can really do anything and everything from what we offer on our platform,” Michel says.

Online designers can help decorators capture new Web-based customers, like those flocking to companies like Smurk. But a development that has been surprising to some, according to Brenden Prazner, product manager at DecoNetwork, is how much a shop’s existing customers enjoy being able to self-serve via the Web. Sports coaches, for example, love the ability to use online designers to confirm the spelling of players’ names. Encouraging such self-service also lifts

some of the burden from the decorator, Prazner adds. Rather than spending 30 minutes to sit down with an indecisive customer in their shop – losing precious time and money – decorators can now direct such clients to their website to experiment. “They can spend as much time as they want, swapping fonts and colors without taking up anyone’s time,” Prazner adds.

Don’t expect the personalization trend to wane anytime soon. “I think it’s going to continue to grow in terms of mass media and mass consumer products,” Hunt says. “People expect it, and they want it. That’s been heard loud and clear.”

THERESA HEGEL is a senior staff writer for *Stitches*. Contact her at thegel@asicentral.com and follow her on Twitter at @TheresaHegel.

Lessons From the Pros

If you plan to add customization options and e-commerce to your shop’s website, here are a few lessons to take away from the pros.

1. Make it easy. Ramin Ramhormozi, creator of Personalization Pop, a personalization hub for online store owners, has been in the e-commerce business since the late 1990s. In the early years, when he offered personalized groom gifts, he was frustrated that technology had not caught up to his needs. Customers then couldn’t easily add unique names and messages to multiple copies of the same item. Rather than filling everything out on one browser page, they had to add the item to the shopping cart individually, adding significantly to order time. Today, that wouldn’t fly. People want to be able to add their personal touches

quickly online or via mobile, without a lot of hassle, and there’s technology out there that makes this possible. “It’s beautiful from a user standpoint how simplistic it is,” Ramhormozi says.

2. Set expectations. If you offer a virtual sample of a monogram or other custom work, make sure it’s a realistic representation, says Brian Goldberg of Pulse Microsystems. “You’re trying to entice the customer to place the order,” he adds. “But now the customer is going to expect the product to look like that.”

3. Don’t overwhelm people with choices. Print All Over Me has a very structured and limited design tool. You upload one design, and decide how large you want the pattern to be. (Think of it like the textile-making challenge on *Project Runway*.)

The rest of the design choices are made on the back end, though company co-founder Meredith Finkelstein says they may add more functionality as users grow more accustomed to using the site. “We didn’t want to offer it all at once,” she says.

4. Customize your own setup. Even smaller shops can benefit from automation and online design tools, experts say. Consider low-entry, subscription-based software models, where you can pull out anytime, rather than making a big up-front investment into software. “We have invested over \$10 million in DecoNetwork,” says Brenden Prazner, adding that DecoNetwork’s clients get the benefit of that investment into e-commerce and marketing, without having to make their own significant up-front investment.

Specialty Printing & Imaging Technology

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ANNUAL SOFTWARE GUIDE 2015

***Stitches'* annual Software Guide provides key information on the industry's latest software packages, from business management to monogramming and lettering and more, with user reviews from actual customers.**

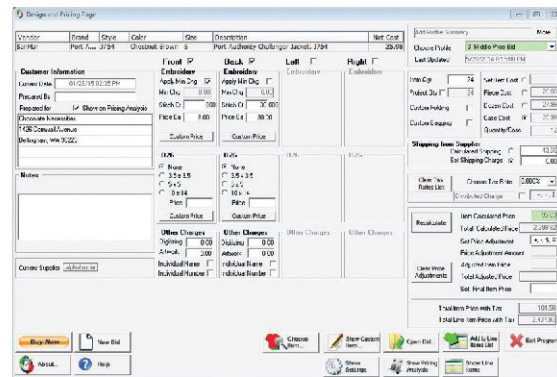
By Sara Lavenduski and Nicole Rollender



ASI SmartBooks



ASI SmartBooks
Scan this code to view the SmartBooks video.



Fast Accurate Bids for Embroidery

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

ASI SmartBooks and ProfitMaker

ASI Computer Systems (asi/30238), Cedar Falls, IA; (319) 266-7688;

www.asicomp.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What it is: These business management software packages allow companies to manage all intricate business processes with a single flexible and powerful business application. They integrate accounting, sales, marketing, order entry, inventory, purchasing, shipping, reporting and product sourcing from ESP into one application.

What's new:

- Atwork tracking, decorator instructions, size/color matrix and tracking on additional charges/costs for wearables orders
- Drop-ship, inventory and customer-owned inventory order management
- Custom user-defined order tracking
- ProfitMaker is fully customizable, and its uniquely tailored system upgrades are always available.

Key features:

- Fully ESP-enabled, and pulls product data directly from user's database or ESP when adding products
- Data for each customer pre-fills the purchase order to cut checks instantly
- Moves from "Quote to Cash" without requiring rekeying data
- Pre-set with more than 100 most-used reports, which can then be customized.

Buyer's note: This software is designed for companies in the advertising specialty industry looking to save time and money by managing the entire front-office and back-office functions with a single flexible and powerful application.

User review: "We've evaluated a number of other business management options," says Barbara Sedgwick Brown, CEO of MadeToOrder Inc. (asi/259540) in Pleasanton, CA. "ASI Computer Systems has offered us the most cost-effective price/performance ratio. In fact, we've been using ProfitMaker for over 30 years." Her company's main concentration is Fortune 1000 companies, and they specialize in drop-shipping

promotional products. "The commission portion of the software is robust and has never failed us," she explains, "and the customer service at ASI Computer Systems has been very helpful over the years."

Fast Accurate Bids for Embroidery

Fast Accurate Bids LLC, Bellingham, WA; (360) 752-3310; www.fastaccuratebidsforembroidery.com

Cost: \$249, with no monthly fee, free customer support and 30-day free trial.

What it is: This estimating software for embroiderers and other apparel decorators allows users to create finished, professional-looking bids that are ready to print or email to customers in less than two minutes. This package was designed by software professionals working in collaboration with embroidery industry expert Deborah Jones. The embroidery version of Fast Accurate Bids was launched in 2015.

Key features:

- Support for all types of bids, including mixed item bids and itemized pricing

• Allows for creation of pricing profiles for different types of customers and jobs, such as typical pricing, schools, nonprofits and contract work

• Built-in pricing, based on a wide survey of industry data, can be used without changes; beneficial for shops uncertain about what to charge

• For shops with established pricing, even the most complex pricing structures can be easily and reliably matched

• Updatable item pricing for alphabroder, American Apparel, S&S Activewear and SanMar.

Buyer's note: The full version of Fast Accurate Bids is recommended for businesses that offer both embroidery and screen printing. Fast Accurate Bids for Embroidery is suited to both new and established embroidery companies. It's quick to set up, and easy to learn and use.

User review: Michelle Bradley, founder and owner of West End Plaza (asi/358224) in Metropolis, IL, offers screen printing, vinyl lettering and embroidery, and plans to expand

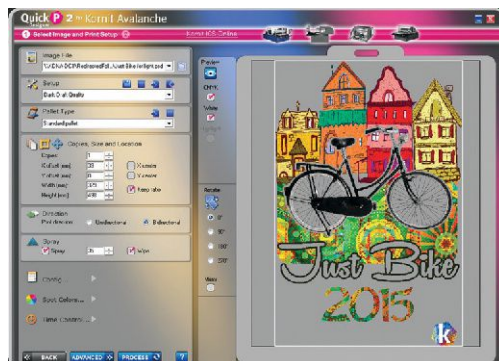
her shop's signage capabilities. Most of her orders are filled locally, including for small businesses, the community college, area schools, churches and organizations. "I've been in the business for only one year," Bradley says, "and Fast Accurate Bids has helped with the learning curve of pricing. It's so hard to know how much to charge, but Fast Accurate Bids has helped me become competitive and make a good profit." Bradley says the learning curve was minimal, and that after 45 minutes of an Internet meeting with the owner of Fast Accurate Bids, she was sold on the service. "The time it saves is wonderful because it takes everything into account behind the scenes," she says. "I've done bids on jobs from 30 shirts to 500 shirts with confidence and ease."

Kornit QuickP Designer 2.1

Kornit Digital, Rosh-Ha'Ayin, Israel; (972) 3-9085800; www.kornit.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What it is: QuickP Designer allows quick processing of image files for printing on Kornit printers. It enables easy, fast and complete offline preparation of image files based on automatic processing; upstream file preparation is separated from printing, allowing higher productivity. The latest version supports Paradigm II and offers the ability to generate white separation for screen for Paradigm II dark garment printing; it also offers an ink estimator tool for Paradigm II.



Kornit QuickP Designer 2.1

What's new:

- Spot-color editor and single point of control
- Scale by pallet size
- Semi-transparency support
- Compatible with Windows 8.1.

Buyer's note: QuickP software provides greater automation while enabling the creation and use of pre-defined setups. Those setups define the machine and image settings for printing on the majority of media available in the market without wasting time on the printer itself. The fast and easy printing of files doesn't require further processing requirements, and there's no need for external RIP-ing applications.

Kornit QuickP Plus 2.0

Kornit Digital, Rosh-Ha'Ayin, Israel; (972) 3-9085800; www.kornit.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What it is: This complete design, order, create and print system includes intuitive design creation for garment decorators, an intelligent variable data system for quick and

easy mass personalization and a workflow platform designed to improve company-wide organization and productivity.

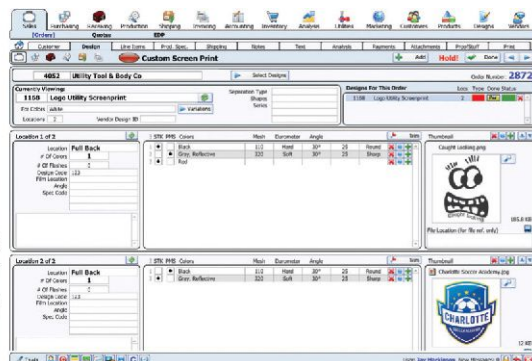
What's new:

- Workflow system manages the order process
- Library system for designs and fonts
- Inventory control system connected to design creation software
- Library of garments, each with individual printer setup configurations.

Key features:

- Bar-coding capability that eliminates manual loading time and operator error
- Variable data system for mass personalization.

Buyer's note: Kornit QuickP Plus 2.0 was created specifically to support Kornit's direct-to-garment printers and NeoPigment process. This package is designed for shops looking to improve the designing, ordering, creating and printing process for personalized pieces. With one software program, operators can connect their Kornit direct-to-garment printers to a centralized design database, as well as to their customers,



ShopWorks OnSite 8.1

as part of the Kornit Digital Complete solution.

OnSite 8.1

ShopWorks, West Palm Beach, FL; (800) 526-6702; www.shopworx.com

Cost: Based on total number of concurrent users; cloud version starts at \$347 per month or operators can choose to host data on their servers.

What it is: This business management software allows shops to manage order entry, purchasing, production, sales, marketing and accounting. Operators can run their entire operation with a single integrated package designed specifically for embroidery, screen-printing and promotional product distributor firms. There's a new cloud-based version of the package available.

What's new:

- Improved touch screen for the production floor
- Enhanced customer online proofing of designs and orders
- Accounting improvements.

Key features:

- Compatible with Windows and/or Mac platforms
- Cloud-based, or runs on shop's server



PulseID



ApS-Ethos Artisan Plus digitizing Software



Corel Draw Graphics Suite X7

• Integrates with websites.

Buyer's note: Over 750 companies in the advertising specialty industry, including apparel screen printers, embroiderers, promotional product distributors, award and recognition companies and others, have used OnSite. This software is a good fit for any shop that sells items featuring logos.

User review: *Paul Newson is the managing director at Brazen Clothing in Wellington, New Zealand, a screen-printing company that also offers on-site embroidery and digital printing for the athletics, workwear, retail, corporate and promotional industries. "ShopWorks has been fantastic," Newson says. "Their OnSite software is the best investment I've made in over 20 years of business, better than any machine purchase or any other improvement. OnSite's service and attitude has always been excellent, even though we required a few modifications because we have different tax requirements from users in the U.S."*

PulseID

Pulse Microsystems Ltd., Mississauga, Ontario; (905) 821-

8300; www.pulsemicro.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing. In the U.S., contact Hirsch International, www.bic.us.

What it is: PulseID is a collection of versatile applications and design engines used to automate embroidery, digital printing, rhinestones, engraving or other garment decoration businesses. Users can choose the PulseID elements to improve productivity and efficiency of their business.

What's new: PulseID is now available as a subscription-based, software-as-a-service model.

Key features:

- Enables software and application developers to add embroidery and digital print functionality to their own websites and internal applications
- Allows customers to complete personalized designs on a shop's website in minutes
- Standardizes critical production processes to increase efficiency and eliminate costs associated with manual errors
- Provides detailed report-

ing on machines, designs and operator efficiency, ensuring a business receives its highest level of productivity.

Buyer's note: PulseID is custom-designed to integrate into a shop's current production processes, no matter the company's size or style.

DIGITIZING & GRAPHICS

ApS-Ethos Artisan Plus Digitizing Software

GS USA, Atlanta; (770) 819-1414; www.gs-usa.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What it is: This embroidery software offers a variety of features for easy digitizing, lettering and editing.

What's new:

- Automatic routing and underlay
- Extensive editing tools and auto-digitizing features.

Key features:

- 240 fonts
- Complete database
- Online training.

Buyer's note: This easy-to-operate software is designed for shops that want to expand their digitizing, lettering and editing capabilities.

CorelDRAW Graphics Suite X7

Corel Corp., Ottawa, Ontario; (613) 728-0826; www.corel.com

Cost: Varies by region; \$499 in the U.S.

What it is: This graphic design software solution for both aspiring and experienced designers features a content-rich environment and professional graphic design, photo editing and website design tools. Users can create everything from distinctive logos and signs to custom websites, Web graphics, billboards, car wraps and flyers.

What's new:

- Customizable workspaces
- Redesigned user interface
- Advanced OpenType support
- Powerful fill capabilities.

Key features:

- Redesigned, fully customizable user interface and advanced workspaces
- Total control over fills and transparency
- Vector and bitmap pattern fills
- Easy font preview and advanced character tools
- Special effects and advanced photo editing

- Precise layout and drawing tools
- High-resolution multi-display support.

User review: *Richard Reilly, owner of Fluid Designs Inc. in Jacksonville, FL, and a CorelDRAW Master since 2012, has been in the apparel-decorating industry for more than 20 years, and has used CorelDRAW and the Corel Graphics Suite since the early 1990s. "By far, the best feature of the suite is the customizability of the application," he says. "I can customize the application to fit my specific design needs for easier and faster designing without all the clutter of features I rarely use. With the latest release of the Corel Graphics Suite X7, customization was made faster and easier for users. Customizing your workspace to fit your design needs is something I recommend to every Corel user." Reilly also appreciates the interactive tool set, which he uses on a daily basis with every design he creates "due to the ease of use and the power of the tools."*

DesignShop V10

Melco International, Westminster, CO; (800) 799-8313; www.melcousa.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What it is: This digitizing software is available in four levels for various business applications, from basic editing to full digitizing.

What's new:

- Automatic generation of raster preview when user loads vector graphic into the program; enables user to create exact look and style of the design, including blends and gradients

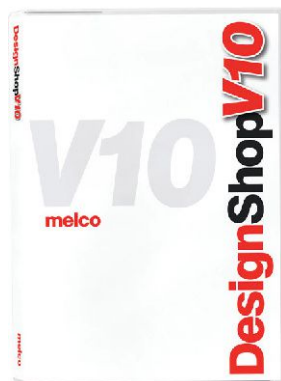
- Includes 25 new premium embroidery fonts, optimized to embroider on Melco embroidery machines
- Compatible with current EPS files, and backward compatible with older EPS files
- Compatible with ART and EMB files
- Built-in thread charts from Isacord and Madeira; includes new colors and color names for ease of use and improved searchability

• Compatible with Windows 7, Windows 8 and Windows 8.1.

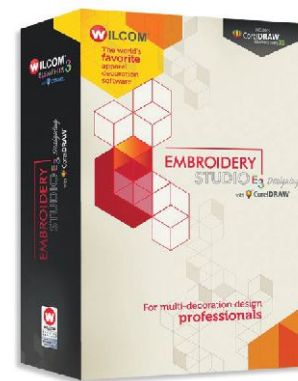
Key features:

- Fabric profiles enable the operator to assign information (such as stitch density) to specific fabrics; save the fabric profile and use it as needed
- Auto-underlay enables designers to choose from multiple underlay styles; digitized objects maintain color properties, even when copying and pasting.

User review: *"There wasn't much of a learning curve with this updated software from Melco," says Rick Barber, owner of Red Eagle Design LLC in Littleton, CO, where he operates five Melco AMAYA XTS embroidery machines for contract embroidery work. "Many of the icons were changed on the main digitizing page, but I easily learned where they were and their functions. I was able to begin digitizing without much of a slowdown. It didn't take long to forget that any other version existed." Barber adds that the many updates and improvements on existing functions made them all easier to use. "One big improvement was the help menu/manual," he*



DesignShop V10



EmbroideryStudio Designing e3.0

says. "It's an overview of every icon on the digitizing screen and what it's used for. I've been using DesignShop software for 14 years, and I learned about some useful functions that I never tried before. I think any learning curve could be overcome by looking in the help menu."

EmbroideryStudio Designing e3.0

Wilcom America, Norcross, GA; (800) 657-7500; www.wilcomamerica.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What it is: This design software offers multi-decoration for printing, embroidery and bling.

What's new:

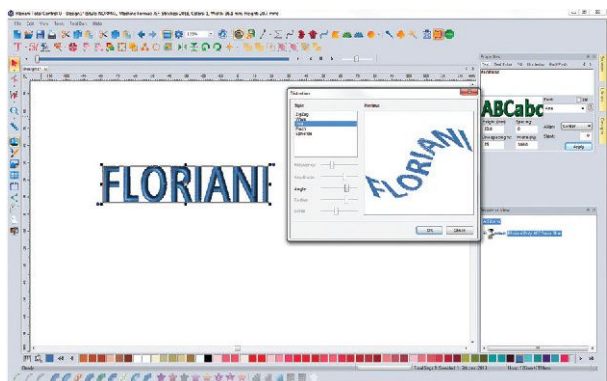
- User-friendly wizard automates user's settings based on fabric selection from underlays to stitch density and compensation
- Over 170 keyboard embroidered fonts and automatic bordering/outlining on all fonts
- Full license of CorelDRAW X6
- Ability to build a software package as business grows with Wilcom Elements; add

features on an à la carte basis.

Key features:

- Wilcom stitch processor for true object-based editing of all major stitch files
 - Superb embroidery lettering; and branching
 - Thirteen digitizing input tools; and auto-digitizing with the ability to edit all elements of a design after conversion
 - Free online training, support and in-house training in Wilcom America's Atlanta office.
- Buyer's note:** Wilcom and CorelDRAW have all the software that shops need for designing and managing the production of embroidery, digital printing, screen printing, rhinestones, laser cutting and more.

User review: *Terry Marchion, digitizer and partner at Design Matrix Group LLC in Marysville, WA, is a Wilcom-authorized trainer who appreciates the total control over the stitching that this software offers. "There are many companies out there that offer similar features," Marchion says, "but the value in this software is that you have so much control over where each stitch goes." Design Matrix Group LLC offers contract*



Floriani Total Control U Build 2838



Forté by Pantograms

services for embroidery, screen printing and direct-to-garment printing, as well as digitizing and graphic design services.

Floriani Total Control U Build 2838

Floriani Commercial Products/RNK Distributing, Knoxville, TN; (877) 331-0034; www.florianicommercial.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What it is: This complete digitizing and embroidery software solution offers all the tools and features that allow operators to take total control over all digitizing, editing and lettering needs. It includes tools for quick digitizing and full control of appliqué, appli-stitch and color-blended designs.

What's new:

- Fling repeat tool uses a selected design element and scatters copies of it randomly in the design workspace
- Auto artwork wizard converts images (.jpg, .bmp) into vector files
- Satin stitch option allows user to split satin stitches when the width becomes too wide to work as satin stitches

- Five new appliqué fonts; 14 new small lettering fonts specifically designed to work with letters between 3mm and 7mm high
- Closest point connect fonts tool allows each letter to start at the point closest to the end of the previous letter, and each letter ends where it lies closest to the next letter.

Key features:

- Ability to save designs as images that can be sent to customers
- Name-drop feature allows users to easily create designs where a name (or other text) changes each time
- Editing capabilities including the ability to edit DST sew files; users can edit density, stitch length, object size and shape, stitch angles, start and end points, underlay and more
- Digitizing capabilities including tools to easily create and control all aspects of run stitches, satin stitches, fill stitches, cross stitches, appliqué designs and appli-stitch designs
- Save2Sew feature modifies designs by changing stitch properties (density, underlay, compensation, etc.) and making

stabilizer recommendations

- Embedded design library gallery provides a quick view of saved designs with the ability to drag and drop files directly onto work page for quick access
- Works with any make or model of embroidery machine; designed to work on a PC, but can be used on a Mac that has been modified to run Windows programs
- More than 170 keyboard fonts.

User review: *Dan Ayres is the president of Wagoner, OK-based Embroidery By Design, where he and his team specialize in company logos and production products for retailers, as well as monogramming, lettering and fabric embellishing. He credits Floriani with teaching him the skills necessary to be able to digitize all of his clients' designs and projects. "After using the resources provided with the Floriani Total Control U software, including videos and webinars at www.myfloriani.club, I digitize everything," Ayres says. "This software gives me the flexibility to achieve the results my customers are looking for. With my digitizing ability, along with the Total Control U*

software, I now offer specialty projects like standalone embroidered plaques, textured fabric creation and extremely large designs using the split design wizard."

Forté by Pantograms

Pantograms Mfg. Co. Inc., Tampa, FL; (800) 872-1555; www.pantograms.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What it is: Forté comes in three levels: the FortéLE lettering and editing program, the FortéID intermediate digitizing program and the FortéPD advanced professional digitizing program.

What's new:

- Windows 8 compatibility
- Additional thread colors.

Key features:

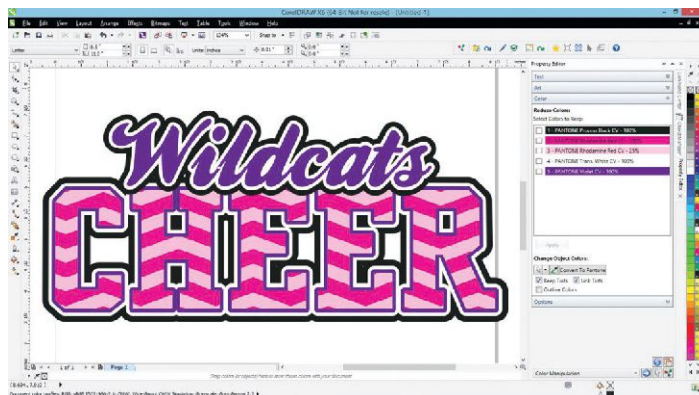
- Accommodates vector artwork for easier digitizing
- Users can import and auto-digitize vector designs as stitches using DRAWings Converter
- More than 250 pre-digitized fonts in five categories
- Lettering controls for adjusting line spacing, kerning and word spacing, as well as controlling character size and width, character angle, paragraph justification and monogram sizing.

Smart Designer Pro

Digital Art Solutions (asi/14970), Tempe, AZ; (800) 959-7267; www.digitalartsolutions.com

Cost: \$499

What it is: This software program transforms CorelDRAW X6 and X7 from a generalized design application into an industry-specific graphics sys-



Smart Designer Pro



bernette Embroidery Software Customizer

tem designed to simplify and automate the graphic design process.

What's new:

- More than 100 features have been added using Corel Corp.'s new seamless docker technology
- Compatibility with CorelDRAW X6 and X7 and Windows 8.1.

Key features:

- Automates and simplifies more than 100 complex design and production tasks, including text effects, circle text, arches, athletic tails and weathered effects
- Automatically creates virtual samples from a library of stock product templates in both vector and high-resolution photographic formats
- Integrated with more than 30 titles of Digital Art Solutions' digital art volumes, capable of interactively editing stock design templates to create custom graphics quickly.

Buyer's note: This software is ideal for anyone wishing to streamline the design and production of graphics for the apparel decoration industry. The software manufacturer

says the package will reduce design and production time by up to 90% through automation and the addition of industry-specific features to CorelDRAW.

**MONOGRAMMING
& LETTERING**

**bernette Embroidery
Software Customizer**

BERNINA of America,
Aurora, IL; (630) 978-2500;
www.bernina.com

Cost: \$249 MSRP

What it is: bernette Embroidery Software Customizer makes it easy to create personalized designs by combining lettering, monogram frames and appliqué. Embroidery designs can further be customized with color and thread preferences and lettering with unique fill stitches.

What's new: Compatible with bernette's Chicago 7 and Deco 340 embroidery machines, as well as any embroidery machine brand.

Key features:

- 78 embroidery designs, 24 appliqué designs and four monogramming frames
- Lettering created with Win-

dows TrueType fonts can be sized from less than a ¼" to more than 2"

- 30 fill stitch options and auto underlay stitching for enhanced lettering
- Options to scale, rotate, mirror and combine designs with lettering to create a personal monogram
- Users can add their own hoop sizes
- Slow-redraw function allows preview of stitching sequence
- Compatible with Windows 7 and 8
- Designs can be opened and saved in multiple formats, including ART 70 and EXP
- Designs are created on the computer and transferred to the embroidery machine via a USB stick.

Buyer's note: bernette Embroidery Software Customizer is an option for first-time and budget-conscious embroidery enthusiasts.

E-Fect Promotion

DecoDynamix, Durban, South Africa; (27) 82-3444068; www.decodynamix.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What it is: Wilcom Key-

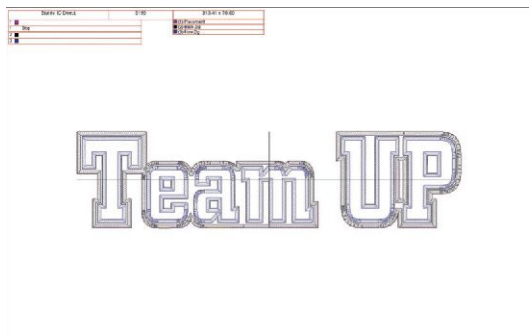
board Fonts (ESA) are add-on software packs for users of Wilcom Embroidery Software. ESA fonts are pre-digitized with enhanced manipulation capability to create the most powerful keyboard layouts possible in your software. These are life-time software assets that will remain with each upgrade, and keyboard fonts never expire or become obsolete in your software. Download the free BallantineScript ESA to test and compare, as well as additional free font and design data.

What's new:

- High-quality personalization, corporate and monogram styles
- Large-text format styles and large format monogram styles with auto download on all font packs.

Key features:

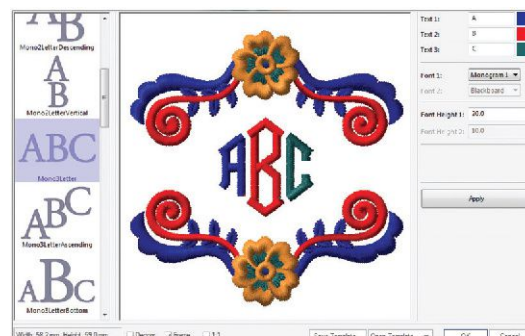
- Lossless resizing within a larger range than any machine file
- Enhanced manipulation capability within the software
- Instant layout capability with team names, monograms and closest-point connection styles.



Embroidery Express Sew Files



StockStitch 6.2



Tajima DG15 by Pulse

Embroidery Express Sew Files

Stahls' (asi/88984), St. Clair Shores, MI; (800) 478-2457; www.stahls.com

Cost: \$24 for Any Word. Any Way. appliqué; \$36 for a split-front appliqué; \$45 for a custom appliqué; \$129 for the CD collection.

What it is: Embroidery Express Sew Files are available for Custom Cut appliqués or appliqués created through Stahls' Any Word. Any Way. online lettering designer. They're available for an individual appliqué order or as a collection of CDs, which contains the sew files for specialty numbers, auto stitch and appliqué shapes.

What's new: Available for a growing line of appliqué products.

Key features:

- Elimination of unnecessary stitches, an exclusive feature that eliminates background stitches where appliqué pieces overlap for a smooth finish
- Precision stitching calculated to overlap the appliqué design exactly
- Mitered corners for ease of sewing and a finished look.

StockStitch 6.2

Dalco Athletic, Dallas; (800) 288-3252; www.dalcoathletic.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What it is: StockStitch is a Windows-based program designed for automated sewing of stock letters, numbers and appliqué shapes. Stock Stitch is a standalone program and doesn't require editing or merging.

What's new:

- Users can sew six sublimated twill number fonts in one, two and three colors
- Number fonts include Pro Team, Dagger, Shock, Team Shadow, Digital Camo and Camo
- Newest version is compatible with Windows 8; StockStitch is compatible with XP, Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8.

Key features:

- More than 40 fonts, as well as banners, ribbons, states and more
- Can be used with any of the most popular materials offered by Dalco, including twill; designer fabrics like polka dots; pebble grain, which simulates

the look of a basketball or football; and Dal-Chenille, a material that looks like real chenille but is much faster to use

- User can select multiple sizes of each font and multiple stitch types (bean, satin, zigzag), and control the stitch width and density
- Users with digitizing or editing software can add embroidery drop-ins to appliqué created in StockStitch. Once the design is created in StockStitch, users can order pre-cut, ready-to-sew pieces from Dalco.

Buyer's note: This software is specifically designed for appliqué, so it's ideal for shops that focus on team uniforms, spiritwear or fashion appliqué. This package doesn't require additional digitizing software. All component parts are pre-cut to fit the StockStitch pre-digitized program.

Tajima DG15 by Pulse

Pulse Microsystems Ltd., Mississauga, Ontario; (905) 821-8300; www.pulsemicro.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing. In the U.S., contact Hirsch International, www.bic.us.

What it is: DG15 is software for embroidery lettering, monogramming, digitizing, laser, sequins, chenille, appliqué, rhinestones and more. It includes brand-new access to PulseCloud, which allows users to view and edit up to 100,000 designs in the cloud.

What's new:

- Create personalized monograms with the Monogram Wizard
- Machine integration features
- Powerful 64-bit processing.

Key features:

- PulseCloud allows users to edit designs from any mobile device and share on social media
 - Monitor machine status from home or the road with PulseCloud
 - Send messages to machine operators on the controller from within the design
 - Built-in DrawFusion feature for instant conversion of CorelDRAW artwork into stitches
 - Over 170 standard fonts including those designed specifically for small lettering.
- Buyer's note:** DG15 is best suited for commercial embroidery businesses. Specialty



CadworxLive.com



DecoNetwork

options like sequins, chenille, rhinestones and laser enhance a user's embroidery and provide an additional avenue for profitability.

ONLINE TOOLS

CadworxLive.com

GroupeSTAHL, St. Clair Shores, MI; www.cadworxlive.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing; Cadworxlive currently offers a free Bronze Membership and will begin offering Silver and Gold Memberships in 2015.

What it is: CadworxLive is a Web-based graphic design system developed to simplify the design-to-production workflow processes typical in most personalization, sign and custom products businesses.

What's new:

- CadworxLive will undergo a complete makeover later in 2015. Expect to see a new Web portal focused on training, education and customer

support, a brand-new Design Studio 3 application with tablet and touch capabilities and improved integration with a host of new digital cutters and print-and-cut devices

- Every CadworxLive membership includes the new, improved VectorCut 2.0 cut driver and offers premium artwork created by industry expert Dane Clement.

Key features:

- Largest text effects library available anywhere
- Unique split-front process
- Ability to output to a variety of production methods including: CAD-CUT; digital-print heat transfers; digital print and cut; screen printing and direct-to-garment printing
- Can be used to create files for appliqué when used in conjunction with Twill Stitch Pro or Ioline 301 software
- Membership includes: Design Studio; CAD-CUT Easy Teams; thousands of pieces of clipart; hundreds of

design layouts; a huge font selection; Cadworx Creations Gallery; and VectorCut, a cut driver developed exclusively for CadworxLive.

User review: "I'd recommend this software to anyone," says Debbie Wiersema, owner of D&M Embroidery in Fulton, IL, where she caters to baseball teams, softball teams, schools and special events, such as bachelorette parties and funeral memorials. "CadworxLive is easy to use and it's one of the primary software programs I use. It's so easy to import designs." Wiersema also appreciates the service she's received from GroupeSTAHL. "They're awesome to work with," she says. "If I have issues, they're there to walk me through step by step."

DecoNetwork

DecoNetwork (asi/177784), Whittier, CA; (855) 332-6638; www.deconetwork.com

Cost: Subscription starting from \$39 per month.

What it is: This online

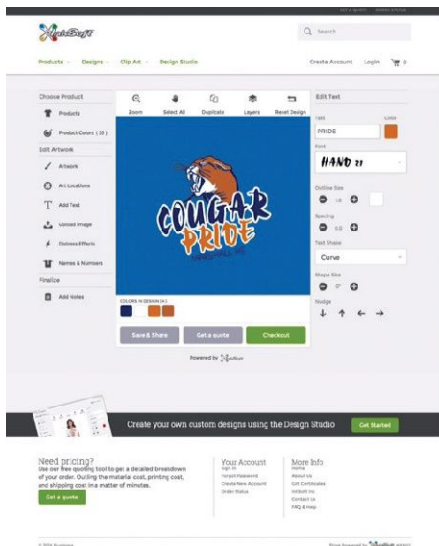
designer, website and business software is tailor-made for the printing and embroidery industry, and makes it easier for customers to do business with decorating shops.

What's new:

- Quick-quote submission for instant price on shop's website
- Transfer and rhinestone template processes
- Direct purchasing with major industry suppliers
- Hundreds of micro features as part of the regular two week releases.

Key features:

- Business Hub: Quote, order, purchasing and production management software
- Online designer for customers to self-serve and check out online
- Support for direct-to-garment printing, screen printing, embroidery, sublimation, rhinestone template and transfers.



InkSoft Design Studio



Auto Laser Lettering (ALL)

Buyer's note: This software is a good choice for printers, embroiderers and decorators looking to manage their business and grow new opportunities through online sales. There are more than 26,000 North American-based customers using the DecoNetwork platform.

InkSoft Design Studio

InkSoft Inc., Tempe, AZ;
(800) 410-3048; www.inksoft.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing; flexible options available.

What it is: Design Studio is a custom interactive online designer made for printers by printers. It has been redesigned and re-engineered using HTML5 technology, allowing customers to design from Web, tablet or mobile device. Design Studio also has a new user interface.

What's new:

- Thousands of new premium design templates and clip art

(more than 10,000 total)

- Online fundraising Web store technology
- Company/spiritwear store themes
- Online art approval, quoting and invoicing features.

Key features:

- Clients can design online from a decorating shop's website
- Embeddable, which allows user to add it to existing website
- Player names and numbers feature
- Quick quoting and shopping cart
- Save and share feature.
- Distress vintage effects.

Buyer's note: Design Studio is for decorators, especially printers, who want to leverage the potential and power of online marketing.

User review: *Los Angeles-based Gary Lewis, formerly the CEO of a custom decorated-apparel business, was an early user of InkSoft Design Studio about three to four years ago,*

after finding it through an Internet search. "I needed software that would support in-house customization," he says. "We mostly filled orders for jerseys and T-shirts for high school football, baseball and basketball teams. My work has changed, but if I still did that kind of customization, I'd definitely be using it." He also had a positive experience with InkSoft's customer service. "The system is very easy to learn," he says, "but if you have trouble, you can call InkSoft 24/7."

SPECIALTY DECORATION

Auto Laser Lettering (ALL)

Bito USA, Deer Park, NY;
(866) 248-6872; www.bitousa.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What it is: ALL automates the process of designing number and letter appliqué designs that are sent to the laser for cutting and embroidering. With ALL, it can

be profitable to create just a single piece because of the time and labor savings.

What's new:

- Updated and improved with new capabilities that allow users to design more sophisticated, decorative lettering using a galvanometric laser
- Capability to do multiple sizes in different fonts at the same time
- Once a combination of fonts and sizes are determined, a template can be created and saved for repetitive use.

Key features:

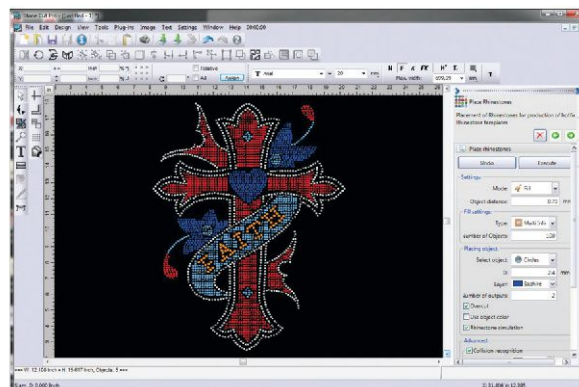
- Works with TrueType fonts to create the most popular typeface styles
- Offers a variety of finishing stitches such as zigzag, column, bean (triple) and a single running stitch. Characters may be created for single or multiple layers of fabric, providing for kiss-cut and multicolored appliqués
- Full control of cutting and stitching line placements, enabling the user to create a variety of appliqués, including, but not limited to, reverse, multi-layer and fashion trim appliqués, where a running stitch is sewn in the middle of the fabric and then cut on both sides of the stitch to create a fat-looking column
- Can be used for vector shapes and images other than letters and numbers, making it an automatic appliqué digitizing system as well
- Same capabilities used for letters and numbers may be applied to any TrueType image, making ALL a program that automates and combines stitching and cutting simultaneously.



Forever TransferRIP



R-Wear Studio Software



StoneCut Pro version 1.5 Rhinestone Multi-Decoration Software

Forever TransferRIP

Coastal Business Supplies Inc., Maryland Heights, MO; (800) 562-7760; <http://coastalbusiness.com>

Cost: \$599

What it is: This Windows-compatible optimization printing software is designed to set up and coordinate print jobs for OKI color-laser transfer white toner printers with pre-set printer profiles for Forever transfer media. It allows the operator to easily set up and coordinate print jobs for best results.

What's new:

- Ability to apply a screen-printing halftone pattern – fully customizable – to transfers, making them durable with a soft hand
- Preview a high-definition image of the graphic to avoid costly issues and printing mistakes.

Key features:

- Image and color adjustments are easily done within the software setup
- Reduce printing costs by selectively reducing the amount of white toner being applied

- Easy color-removal tool makes transfers seamlessly blend into the T-shirt fabric color without extra equipment or processes
- Easily import EPS, PSD, PDF, TIFF, JPG and PNG images into the print queue to begin editing the print job and image
- Easy adjustment of image color, contrast, saturation and more.

Buyer's note: This software is a good choice for decorators that use an OKI Data color laser printer paper to make transfers.

R-Wear Studio Software

Graphic Solutions Group, Dallas; (214) 712-6200; www.gogsg.com

Cost: \$499

What it is: R-Wear Studio Software allows users to create custom rhinestone transfers for decorating a wide range of apparel and accessories. The software package is included at no extra charge with Roland's EGX series of desktop engravers, and it can be used to decorate T-shirts, hats, jeans and handbags.

Key features:

- Create templates for hot-fix rhinestones, which can then be applied with a heat press
- Accepts a variety of graphic formats, including BMP, JPG, GIF and PNG; Adobe Illustrator 7 and 8 also can be used for AI and EPS files
- Generate stroke fonts for customized inscriptions such as initials, names or messages
- Choose from a digital library of more than 500 styles of Swarovski rhinestones
- Automatically calculates profits and control rhinestone inventories.

StoneCut Pro Version 1.5 Rhinestone Multi-Decoration Software

Digital Art Solutions (asi/14970), Tempe, AZ; (800) 959-7267; www.digitalartsolutions.com

Cost: \$599

What it is: This is an application for converting scanned artwork or vector artwork into rhinestone patterns for the production of rhinestone apparel and rhinestone decals. It's a key software component of

the DAS Multi-Decoration System, and includes multi-decoration capabilities for producing apparel graphics that combine rhinestones, cuttable heat transfers, direct-to-garment prints and screen-printed graphics.

What's new:

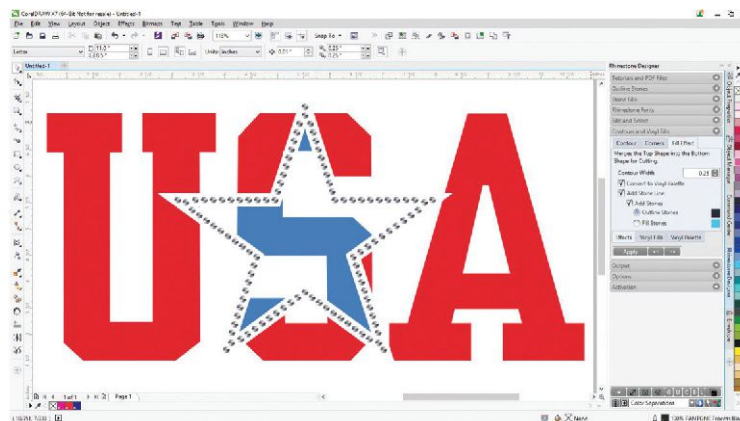
- Compatibility with CorelDRAW X6 and X7 and Windows 8.1
- Color separations feature for rhinestone templates
- Use overcut function for optimized cutting of glitter vinyl, small text and rhinestone templates.

Key features:

- Assists with workflow of creating multi-decoration graphics with automated functions for converting scanned graphics or vector graphics into complex rhinestone patterns
- Output transfers directly to more than 600 supported vinyl cutters to produce a rhinestone heat-transfer stencil
- Supports exclusive TrueType rhinestone fonts from Digital Art Solutions, which allow users to create rhinestone text
- Name-dropping function can import text from a spreadsheet



Proel Millennium III



Rhinestone Designer Rhinestone Multi-Decoration Software for CorelDRAW X7

and create a list of names in rhinestone text

- Can be used as a standalone program or integrated with Corel Corp.'s CorelDRAW or Adobe Illustrator.

Buyer's note: This software is designed for decorators who are starting or growing their rhinestone business.

Proel Millennium III

Bito USA, Deer Park, NY; (866) 248-6872; www.bitousa.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What it is: Proel Millennium III is a comprehensive embroidery software digitizing program with laser-cutting capabilities that allows the customer to purchase the amount of capabilities and features needed with the option to add advanced tools later. Basic functions include lettering, editing, basic digitizing, advanced digitizing and automatic digitizing.

What's new:

- Automatically digitizes vectors and deposits stitches to vector-defined artwork. The user can create complex fills

with void areas, a feature that has eluded almost all other systems

- Ability to send an image to customers for approval of digitized embroidery designs without the customer needing an embroidery program to view it
- Outputs machine data in multiple machine formats and produces detailed work sheets for a firm's production department.

Key features:

- Creates specialty stitch motifs such as hearts, flowers, diamonds, circles and more
- Offers complex fills, with the sophisticated calculation for voided areas within complex fills
- Works with Auto Laser Lettering (ALL) to integrate embroidery with laser cutting; includes programming necessary for an embroidery machine to sew out a digitized design and to automatically cut out an appliqué shape using a laser bridge machine or a single-head laser attached to an embroidery machine
- Allows operator to do lines, curves and arcs in order to digitize any type of artwork
- Allows operator to control

entry and exit points, and control the types of stitches created.

Rhinestone Designer Rhinestone Multi-Decoration Software for CorelDRAW X7

Digital Art Solutions (asi/14970), Tempe, AZ; (800) 959-7267; www.digitalartsolutions.com

Cost: \$499

What it is: This add-on multi-decoration software for CorelDRAW X7 converts artwork into rhinestone patterns for the production of rhinestone apparel and rhinestone decals. It's a key software component of the DAS Multi-Decoration System, and includes multi-decoration capabilities for producing apparel graphics that combine rhinestones, cuttable heat transfers, direct-to-garment prints and screen-printed graphics.

What's new:

- Compatibility with CorelDRAW X7 and Windows 8.1
- Rhinestone Drawing Tool allows users to draw rhinestone patterns on-screen
- Vinyl Fill Effect for trimming vector objects through each

other and creating a unique effect with or without an outline of rhinestones

- Dynamic sizing of rhinestone patterns and rhinestone fonts, to switch easily between stone sizes and colors, and to rescale patterns without changing the size of the rhinestones
- Glitter vinyl effect and sparkle effect for creating virtual samples.

Key features:

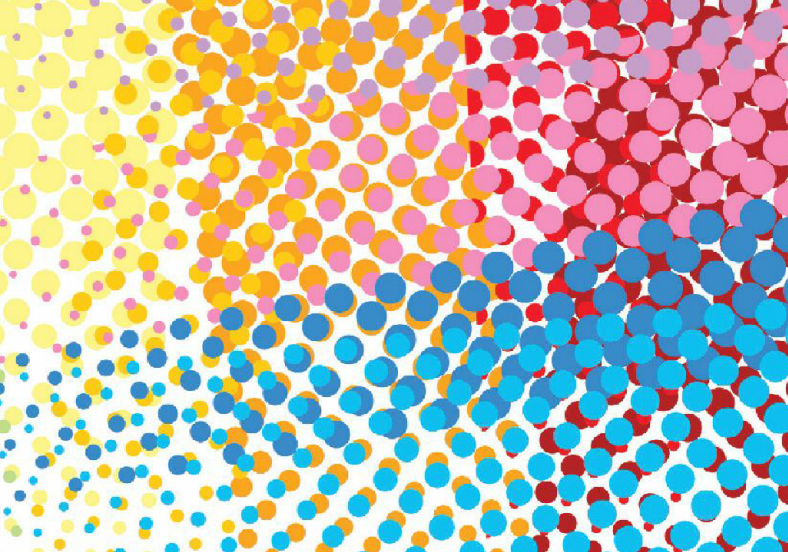
- Assists with workflow of creating multi-decoration graphics with powerful automated functions for converting scanned graphics or vector graphics into complex rhinestone patterns
- Supports exclusive TrueType rhinestone fonts from Digital Art Solutions, which allow users to create rhinestone text
- Seamless integration with CorelDRAW X7 with or without Smart Designer Pro
- Automatic export to popular file formats and cutting programs.

Buyer's note: This software is a good choice for decorators who are starting or growing their rhinestone multi-decoration business.



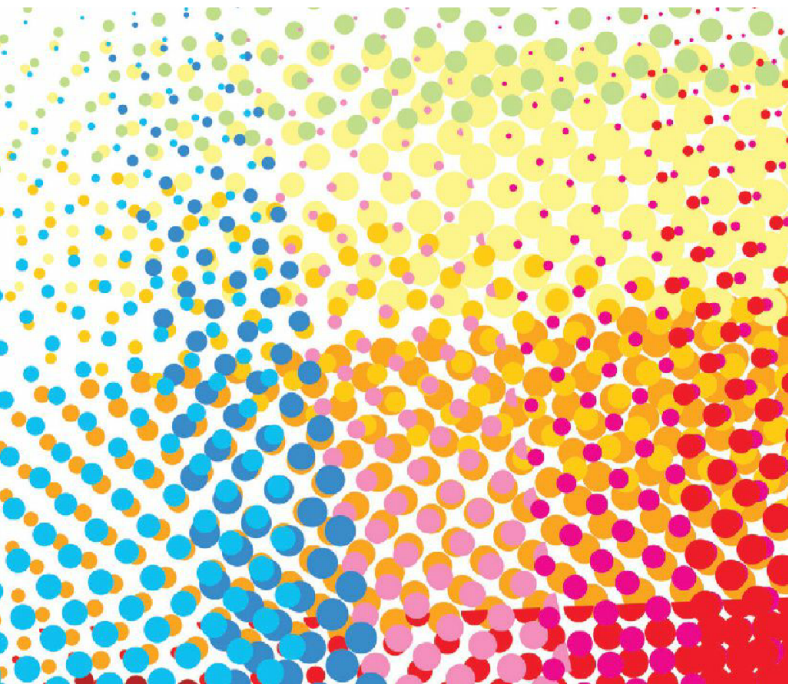
Operations

THE DIGITAL DECISION



Direct-to-garment and dye-sublimation printing have grown by leaps and bounds, and decorators should be investing in these technologies.

By Theresa Hegel



A decade ago, Brian Conway noticed a trend. The owner of contract decorating shop A.I.R. Conway (asi/700040) in Collingdale, PA, found that more and more of his clients were clamoring for high-quality full-color artwork, but they wanted it in smaller and smaller quantities. At the time, A.I.R. Conway offered 500-piece minimums, plus expensive screen and film charges, for process screen-printing jobs.

To fill that growing gap in service, Conway invested in a direct-to-garment printer from Kornit (asi/14972). The investment has paid off. “It’s opened up the door to a lot of new customers,” Conway says. “Our customers can sell better to their customers. They don’t have to turn anyone away anymore.” The digital side of A.I.R. Conway’s business has been steadily rising, with an average annual growth rate of 30%. “We’re very busy with digital. We run hard, eight hours a day,” Conway says, adding that his company is considering purchasing another direct-to-garment printer in the near future.

Screen printing and embroidery are still the company’s bread and butter, but direct-to-garment printing is the jam on the toast – making up about one-fifth of A.I.R. Conway’s overall revenue. Conway says he doesn’t expect “quality-driven digital” to overtake “quantity-driven” methods anytime soon. “It can’t hold the throughput that screen-printing presses can hold,” he says. “It’s a nice niche where people can get the 12 pieces they want and not be rocked with expensive fees.”

For embroidery shops looking to diversify or break into trendy multimedia designs, digital printing is often an ideal addition: It takes up less space and is a cleaner process than traditional screen printing. Still, many decorators are still hesitant to dive into digital, discouraged by early kinks in the technology. But digital processes like direct-to-garment and dye-sublimation printing continue to improve, and it may be time for decorators who initially dismissed the technology to take another look. We outline the strengths and weaknesses of direct-to-garment printing and sublimation, to help you decide which might be right for your shop.

Direct-to-Garment Printing

The Dream Junction in Santa Ana, CA, started out as your average screen-printing shop that happened to do a bit of direct-to-garment printing on the side. The owners of the family company quickly realized their business model was flawed, with Dream Junction barely distinguishable from the already flooded local screen-printing market. “Being in the heart of Orange County, there was kind of one on every corner,” explains Blair Dorsey, CEO and one of six co-owners. “Anybody can set up a screen-printing press in their garage.”

Rather than give up, Dorsey and her family just switched gears, latching onto Dream Junction’s robust digital printing sales and focusing on back-end e-commerce fulfillment. The company jettisoned its screen-printing equipment in favor of a multimillion-dollar investment into direct-to-garment technology, buying six Kornit printers over the last year, with plans to add four more. “It’s incredible,” Dorsey says of her company’s dizzying success with digital. “We’ve actually never done any form of advertising. It’s all been word of mouth.”

The Dream Junction prints 1,000 shirts per machine per day, sometimes for clients with millions of images stored in the system. “For some of our printing partners, we never print the same image twice,” Dorsey says. She adds that clients love the unlimited colors and rich, photographic quality of the printed garments. “We’re able to print 100% to the file,” she says. Plus, the garments have a softer hand than traditional screen prints: “You don’t have the thick piles of ink going on top of each other.”

For Dream Junction and other large-scale direct-to-garment printers, much of the appeal, besides the vibrancy of the prints, is the high barrier of entry, costing at least half a million dollars to set up a production-friendly digital printer and dryer. “That really culls the herd out a little bit,” says Marshall Atkinson, chief



Decorator Dream Junction has built its business through direct-to-garment printing.



The new Paradigm II from Kornit (asi/14972; circle 103 on Free Info Card) transforms a press into a direct-to-garment/screen hybrid and allows for photorealistic direct-to-garment prints on screen-printed tees.



operating officer of Visual Impressions in Milwaukee.

Of course, there are opportunities in direct-to-garment printing for decorators not willing or able to make as large of an investment into digital. It’s all about targeting markets that reward direct-to-garment printing’s strengths, rather than trying to work around its limitations.

Strengths

Image Quality: The ability to print vibrant, photographic-quality artwork

without spending a lot of time and money on setup is one of the big benefits of direct-to-garment printing. “You pretty much just get an image, put it in the software, line it up and hit the green button. It’s pretty simple,” says Mike Polizzi, who decorates shirts with an AnaJet (asi/16000) printer through his home-based shop Embroider It in Bloomsburg, PA. “I feel like the quality is better than when I used a silk-screener, when the logos would start getting wrinkly after so many washes.”

Unlimited Colors: Direct-to-garment allows decorators to print artwork with lots of colors without having to tack on extra charges. “If you have an order of 30 shirts with 12 colors, that’s going to be a really expensive T-shirt to screen print,” Atkinson says. “To print direct-to-garment, it’s not too bad.”

On-Site Capabilities: Direct-to-garment printing is an ideal back-end solution to support design-it-yourself T-shirt and other e-commerce sites, or to handle mobile on-demand printing at festivals. AnaJet has demonstrated this capability at a number of events. On the extreme end, says AnaJet Marketing Director Paul Crocker, was Google’s Androidify event in Times Square last year. The tech company’s event marketing agency, The Magnetic Collaborative, cranked out more than 1,700 personalized T-shirts on AnaJet printers during the two-day event.

Low Minimums: Direct-to-garment printers also allow decorators to take on short-run jobs – the kind traditional screen printers have turned away because it costs too much to burn multiple screens for half a dozen shirts. “If they’re turning those orders away to a local provider of direct-to-garment printing, not only do they lose the short run, they may end up losing the slightly longer run from that customer too,” says Larry Kaufman, product manager at Epson. “You never want to turn your customer over to a competitive business.”

Samples: Printing a sample garment with direct-to-garment printing can be an inexpensive way to placate customers, allowing them to see the placement, approximate color, design size and quality of the shirt itself. That’s how FPS Apparel (asi/53475) uses its direct-to-garment printers, reserving them for one-off designs and customer samples, says Kevin Johnstone, sales and marketing manager.

Limitations

Dark Garments: Direct-to-garment printing technology is at its best on white

100% cotton shirts. Black, navy and other dark fabrics need to be pretreated and dried to prepare them for white ink, without which the other colors would fade into the dark fabric. Not only does this add significantly to the time required for each shirt, but white inks, formulated with titanium dioxide, are “more expensive per square foot and less production-friendly” than other colors, says Christopher Bernat, co-owner of Vapor Apparel (asi/93396), which manufactures sublimation-ready garments, in addition to offering digital decorating services. “Titanium dioxide just isn’t an easy chemical to work with. It’s not fun yet,” he adds. “Everybody’s chasing a production-friendly version of [white ink]. I have no doubt it’ll show up.”

Pretreatment: A common cause of poor printing results is the inconsistent application of pretreatment by decorators – a problem being tackled by several companies. Some vendors sell black T-shirts already pretreated and ready for digital printing. Kornit printers have the ability to pretreat while they print, saving decorators a lot of time and effort, says Yuval Neria, director of product marketing for Kornit. “This is a one-pass process,” he adds.

Pantone Colors: If a client has a specific corporate color, the direct-to-garment printed garment will match it very closely, but it likely won’t be exact, says Atkinson. For some brands, though, close isn’t good enough. Manufacturers are also working on improving in this area. Kornit, for example, offers a six-color printer, adding red and green inks to the traditional CMYK mix for a richer, more extensive color palette.

Regular Use: Direct-to-garment printers must be constantly running to be the most effective. Infrequent use can lead to clogged printhead nozzles and hair-pulling frustration, not to mention wasted time and money, Atkinson says. “A lot of people buy a direct-to-garment printer

and never use it,” he adds. “It becomes a big boat anchor, and they hate it.” Run the numbers on how much potential direct-to-garment work you’re losing before taking the plunge.

Polyester: It’s best to use natural fibers, particularly cotton, when working with this technology. In most cases, polyester is a no-no. “The ink just physically won’t adhere to polyester,” Kaufman explains. Even using a cotton-polyester blend will diminish the print quality. This is another area manufacturers are working on, however. Kornit’s water-based pigment ink allows for printing on polyester and other synthetic fabrics, though it’s a more complicated process than working with cotton, Neria says. “You need to use the printer in a slightly different way,” he adds.

When to Add

Direct-to-garment printing is probably not the best choice for decorators who deal mostly in black T-shirts or performance fabrics. However, certain markets – like the outdoor retail and tourism industries – reward decorators for natural-colored tees with photographic and vector art, in which case direct-to-garment printing may be the most cost-effective way of catering to those buyers, he adds. It’s also the way to go if you’re trying to capitalize on short-run work or catch online dollars, perhaps from a design-it-yourself T-shirt site.

In direct-to-garment printing’s early days, many decorators shied away, for example, turned off by unreliable, cobbled-together machines – often hacked Epson printers and inks. The market has since matured, with manufacturers – including Epson itself – introducing dedicated direct-to-garment solutions, with increased print speed and reliability. Expect the future to bring a marriage of traditional screen printing and digital technologies. Consider, for example, Kornit’s recently introduced Paradigm II, which transforms a press into a direct to garment-screen hybrid. “This may become the solution of choice for many [decorators] who have yet to migrate to digital,” Neria says.

Sublimation

Two years ago, the designers at FPS Apparel (asi/53475) had a winning idea: Take an existing hoodie and a swatch of fabric sublimated with a bold design and marry the two together, sewing the so-called “sublimated accent” inside the hood to create a custom lining. “We’ve gotten an incredible response,” says Kevin Johnstone, sales and marketing manager at FPS.

One of the most positive examples was the sublimated hoodie FPS created for UPS employees. The decorator added a bright yellow plaid hood lining to a dark brown full-zip hoodie with an embroidered logo on the side and convinced its client to add the item to the UPS company store. Since then, the hoodie has become the number-one selling item in the employee catalog, Johnstone says.

Since the initial positive feedback, FPS has started experimenting with sublimated accents on other garments: sublimating the sleeves of baseball shirts and side inserts of tank tops, for example. “It takes a garment

to another level. It’s kind of the main thing we’re focusing on now,” Johnstone says.

FPS is making waves in what is considered the highest end of the market: sublimating the fabric itself before turning it into apparel rather than decorating a pre-made garment. But there are many other ways for screen printers to add sublimation to their lineup of services. And with the performance apparel market growing increasingly dominant, there are plenty of good reasons to take another look at this polyester-friendly technology.

Sublimation inkjet printers use special dyes and transfer papers, which are then heat-pressed onto polyester garments. The heat and pressure cause the ink to convert into a gas and bond with the manmade shirt fibers on a molecular level – leaving a colorful design that doesn’t flake or fade. It’s an attractive solution from a branding perspective because of the artwork’s relative permanence. “Unless you stick it out in the Gobi Desert for five years in a row, nothing is going to happen to it,” Bernat says. “Your shirt will probably fall apart long before the design fades.”

Strengths

Performance Apparel: Performance apparel, particularly for sports and active-wear, has been exploding in recent years. Dye sublimation is often the perfect decoration choice, since it’s designed to bond to synthetics. The vibrant designs, paired with practical features like moisture wicking and UV protection, help decorators up the perceived value of a garment and increase profit margins.

Diversification: Sublimation can also be used to decorate hard goods, giving a decorator more markets to target. Done right, a decorator can see a return on investment in as little as three months by focusing on high-markup items like phone cases, says Catalina Frank, a product manager for Epson’s sublimation printers. Depending on



Stunning allover prints are possible through sublimation, as demonstrated by Vapor Apparel (asi/93396; circle 104 on Free Info Card).

the level of customization, a printer could charge a markup as high as 200% on a sublimated case, she says. For decorators targeting sports markets, consider other ways to add value. Instead of just decorating jerseys, try offering custom sublimating services for skis, snowboards and other equipment.

Unlimited Colors: Sublimation offers the opportunity to use as many colors as the client or decorator wants. Even at the entry-level use of “spot-hit sublimation,” decorators can add a small full-color design to a garment. It requires the smallest investment, but done well, can also reap significant rewards, Bernat says.

Allover Printing: Allover looks are very popular these days, and with sublimation, it’s fairly easy to “take an existing garment and hit the entire thing with ink,” Bernat says. The allover look is particularly popular in the athletic world, for items such as wrestling singlets and paintball jerseys.

Cut and Sew: The premium level of sublimation is cut-and-sew, where the fabric is sublimated using a roll-to-roll press before being constructed into a finished garment. It has the highest investment cost, but many



FPS Apparel (asi/53475; circle 105 on Free Info Card) has used sublimation as a bold branding accent in unexpected places, like sublimated hoodie liners on sweatshirts (FL185).

customers love the results. Vapor Apparel has seen its demand for cut-and-sew sublimation services grow dramatically year over year, so much so that the company is investing \$1.3 million to expand that side of the business into a new 30,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in South Carolina.

Limitations

Creases: Allover printing is an “imperfect solution,” according to Bernat, since areas of the garment that don’t lie absolutely flat won’t receive color. Typically, in a sublimated T-shirt, you see this with white crease marks under the arms. Many decorators get creative to minimize the issue, working the undyed areas into the design, Frank says. “They go to extremes just to hide those possible defects,” she says. Other potential solutions include marbleizing the artwork around the armpits, or starting out with an off-white or gray blank so the undecorated portions are less of a stark contrast.

White Garments: For the most part, sublimation is limited to white fabrics. For decorators focusing on spot-hit designs, this can be a detractor, since end-buyers like more options than basic white tees. However, there are several sublimation-friendly

shades – light earth tones and sea foams – that perform well. “People have these brain locks from the original manufacturer that you can only sublimates on white,” Bernat says. “It’s just not true. You can’t add white, and you can’t take color away, but if your art and shirt color work together, you can get a lot more than a \$10 credit in your market.”

Cotton: Because of the chemical process involved, sublimation doesn’t work with natural fibers like cotton. Using fabric blends can be tricky, especially if your customer is looking for Pantone color-matching. “1% of cotton equals a 1% loss of color control,” Bernat says. “It’s going to be muted. The fact that you can’t make Coca-Cola red pop is a loss of control.”

When to Add

Many decorators are already servicing clients in the lucrative sports and fitness markets, clients who are easily sold on the benefits of performance fabrics. Sublimation is often the best decoration technique for such apparel. The ability to offer allover prints or custom cut-and-sew sublimation is a great differentiator, but even starting out on the lower end, adding a full-color spot-hit sublimation to a performance tee can

be an easy way to increase profit margins. Decorators must determine what level of investment they can handle. If they expect to do smaller runs with the technology, a digital sublimation printer is likely the right solution. For high-volume work, an offset sublimation printer may be necessary. FPS Apparel provides both options to clients, but orders with fewer than 500 pieces cost significantly more, since the decorator can’t take advantage of the speed of the offset process, Johnstone explains.

The popularity of performance fabrics will continue to grow, especially as the price of cotton increases and interest in recycled polyester fiber rises. In the corporate world especially, expect sublimation to follow the same growth trend. “Brands like the fact that sublimation doesn’t fade over time because that’s their logo fading,” Bernat says. It’s a more expensive technology than screen-printed cotton, he adds, but for decorators who specialize in building apparel solutions for clients, rather than selling on low price alone, sublimation can be a winning addition to their existing suite of services.

THERESA HEGEL is a senior staff writer for *Stitches*. Contact her at thegel@asicentral.com and follow her on Twitter at [@TheresaHegel](https://twitter.com/TheresaHegel).

Equip Yourself

Adding digital printing services to your shop can be a significant investment. Direct-to-garment printers range in cost: Epson’s new SureColor F2000 lists at just under \$20,000, whereas Kornit’s top-of-the-line models can run as high as \$400,000 each. Sublimation printers also vary, depending on model size. Epson sells a 44” sublimation printer for \$8,500, and a 64” printer for just under \$20,000. On the other hand, an offset sublimation printer, for high-volume decoration, might come with a million-dollar price tag.

Of course, a decorator needs a lot more than just the printer itself to break into digital printing. Here are some other elements you may need.

Raster Image Processor (RIP) Software: To keep your images from pixelating, you need a program that will rasterize them. Some manufacturers include RIP

software in their product bundle, but there are third-party solutions available if that’s not the case. “A lot of clients are used to screen-printed art where you can get away with murder,” says Christopher Bernat, chief revenue officer for Vapor Apparel (asi/93396). That doesn’t hold true when it comes to sublimation and direct-to-garment printing, he adds.

Heat Press or Heat Tunnel: Both sublimation and direct-to-garment printing require heat, either to complete the sublimation process or cure the digital inks. Sublimators can use either a clamshell press or a roll-to-roll press depending on the size and volume of their work. For direct to garment, a heat tunnel is the secret to improved efficiency, says Marshall Atkinson, COO of Visual Impressions. Depending on the size and sophistication, a heat press could cost anywhere from

several hundred to several thousand dollars. Catalina Frank, product manager for Epson, recommends that sublimation printers consider outsourcing at first if they can’t afford a press. “There are companies dedicated to just heat-pressing,” she adds.

Ink: The quality of the garments you decorate directly relates to the quality of printer inks used, experts say. “I don’t know why people chase \$30 ink,” Bernat says. “The ink can really kill these printers if it’s not made right.”

Transfer Paper: A roll of transfer paper for sublimation printers could cost several hundred dollars, depending on the size.

Pretreatment Machine: Low-volume direct-to-garment printers may be able to get away with a paint roller or spray gun for pretreatment at first. A dedicated pretreatment machine costs several thousand dollars.

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Thursday, July 16	Peyton Manning Keynote	8:30 a.m.-9:45 a.m.
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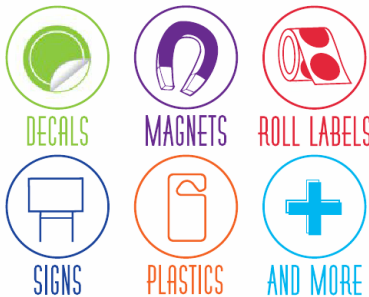
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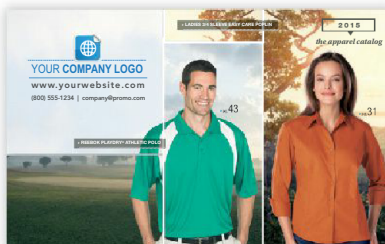
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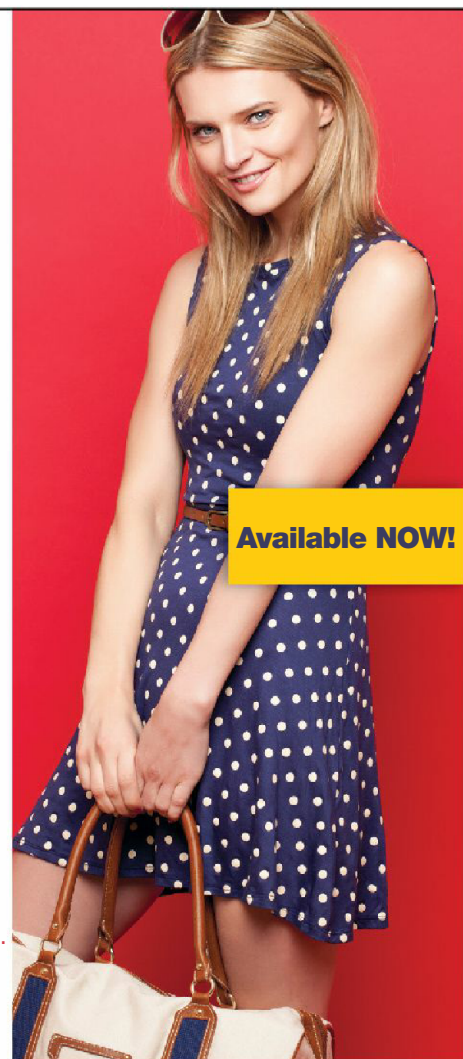
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COMING NEXT ISSUE

What's coming up in August *Stitches*

by Nicole Rollender



Stitches Shop Makeover

In the second edition of "Can This Shop Be Saved?" Embroidery Coach Joyce Jagger heads to *Stitches* in Time in Concord, NC, to help a mother-daughter business team work – and live – together successfully. In this very special feature, we'll show you the shop's 90-day journey to success.



The Perfect Order

In an industry where creativity and customization are expected every day, a lot can go wrong. We'll tell you how to make each order absolutely perfect.

Plus ...

- * How to make your shop sustainably profitable
- * Hot apparel showcase: fleece/outerwear
- * The latest from *Stitches*' Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram sites

And much, much more!

needle watch

Needle Patrol

Our friend Slick (an embroidery machine needle) has hidden himself somewhere in this issue. He might be in an editorial photo, graphic or text – he's not in an advertisement. If you find the needle, send us a note that says, "I found the July needle on page XX," along with your name, company, address and phone number (or email 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 July needle are due by July 31, 2015. 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 September/October issue.



Slick Says, 'It's Cool to Stay in School'

In the May issue, Slick hid on page 43 in the "Education" hot market section of the 2015 *Stitches* State of the Industry section, next to a Hanes ComfortBlend EcoSmart hoodie (ASH312). Connie Henderson of Spartanburg, SC-based Copycat Embroidery was chosen at random from a grand total of 23 responses. As this issue's winner, Connie 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 Tracey Tyree

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next issue, you'll learn some ways to make your shop more sustainable and still turn a profit. See you next issue!

Q *I'm thinking of adding contract decoration to my current end-user business model. Do you have any advice for me on deciding whether it's the right step for me?*

If you're a decorator, by now you've probably already thought about this a time or two. Some have now shifted in that direction entirely, while others offer it as part of what they do, continuing to sell direct. If you're still on the fence, there are good reasons for taking the plunge.

Contract work is a great way to diversify your business – it can widen your network and it helps feed the machines you have running in your shop. But, if you're going to be a contractor and only have a couple of machines, then you're probably only going to be able to sustain a couple of major customers, and you'll end up working for them. If you're a promotional products distributor who runs machines, it might be hard to get other distributors to work with you, because now you're a competitor. You'll need to take a hard look at what you want your business model to be and how much demand you can place on it.

As a contractor, your product is still the same. However, what's involved is not. One benefit of contract work is that the initial legwork on a direct sale has already been done for you. You don't need to find a product your client will like, sizing and collecting prices from assorted apparel suppliers,

“When considering venturing into contract decoration, it's important to review your shop's capacity.”

ers, for example. You can focus on the manufacturing.

Your responsibility involved with an order will also change. You still need to make sure you give an excellent product on time, but now that you'll be working behind the scenes, discretion becomes an important factor. You don't want the word getting out that you sold business to someone's account that trusted you to only run a job for them. This will hurt you down the road, not to mention that you'll lose your customer. Keep in mind that part of the reason you're taking this on is to widen your network. Contracting gets you in front of a lot of clients, so protect your clients' accounts.

In my opinion, the best way to do this is to offer contract decoration only. While some may have found a way to straddle the two, most times, these models don't mix well. As a contractor, your only focus is running your machines. You leave getting the customers to your distributor client, and this works because the distributor will then be looking to you as a source.

Your clientele becomes advertising specialty industry professionals. Although working with distributors presents its own challenges, in most cases, it's easier to work with them. They field end-buyers' questions. They understand the information, artwork and more that you need to run the order, so they don't need you to walk them through the process as much as a brand-new end-user client. Other decorators or apparel suppliers in the industry could be another source of contract work. Decorating firms sometimes have issues with overflow, and if your shop is big enough, you can take some of their workload and create a symbiotic relationship.

When considering venturing into contract decoration, it's important to review your shop's capacity. This is vital information when you're taking on jobs and even more important when you're focusing on filling up your shop with orders. Production and turnaround times are very important, as this is information you're going to convey to

prospective customers quite a bit. If you haven't already, you'll want to start recording your production output now and determine what you can take on while still producing in a timely manner.

You'll also want to look at your assets. How many machines do you have? Is your business housed in a location where you're able to grow? Machines are expensive, so review the costs of running your shop. This is important when it comes to pricing. Larger shops can put out more units at a time, allowing them to charge less on the bulk orders. Smaller shops are built to run smaller orders. A large job could tie up their machines, but their price point may be lower on those moderate-sized orders. Ask yourself: What stage is your shop in now, and is it at a good size to take on contract work?

TRACEY TYREE started as a customer service representative for Stitch Designers (asi/741145), a contract decorator in Louisville, KY. She has been in the industry and with Stitch Designers for the past 11 years, and is now a national accounts manager. Contact: (800) 883-6152 or tracey@stitchdesigners.com.

GOT A DECORATOR DILEMMA?

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

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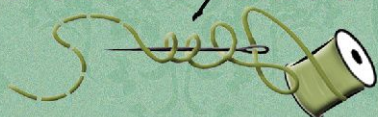


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