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The Dog Hoodie F997



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Meet Manou.

Manou is a Chihuahua mix from Los
Angeles. He has been working for
American Apparel for about 2 years
and designed the dog hoodie during
December of last year. He just recently
graduated from the Hollywood Dog
School in North Hollywood and can
obediently do a sit stay for 4 minutes.
You can catch Manou trying out his new
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Nominated items:

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Wearables Apparel Design Awards

The full breadth of industry creativity is on display with our annual Apparel Design Awards contest. Come check out the stunning winners and finalists. BY C.J. MITTICA, SARA LAVENDUSKI AND MARK PRICKSKETT

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Baggage Claim

No item in the ad specialty industry offers more lasting impressions than a bag. Durable, versatile and stylish, there's a wealth of great bags available in the industry.

BY SARA LAVENDUSKI

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Crossed Paths

We all love apparel, but there is no reason to settle for just selling T-shirts and hats. There is lucrative opportunity in bundling both apparel and hard goods.

BY CHRISTOPHER RUVO

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Ash City's Second Act

Ash City's revenue is growing and its reputation has never been stronger – so Owner Garry Hurvitz just hired his replacement. Why?

BY MICHELE BELL



(Clockwise from top left): Some of the spiffy finalists from our Apparel Design Awards include this four-color screen-printed tee from Target Decorated Apparel (asi/90549; circle 140 on Free Info Card); this custom accessory set from Diane Katzman Design (asi/63988; circle 141 on Free Info Card); this unisex wool knit hat from Bishop the Garment Co. (asi/40585; circle 142 on Free Info Card) and this Flex Fleece dog hoodie (F997) from American Apparel (asi/35297; circle 110 on Free Info Card).



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Wearables ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT.				
By using eco-friendly paper, Wearables magazine has saved the valuable resources below per year.				
TREES	ENERGY	WATER	GREENHOUSE GASES	SOLID WASTE
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We have lots of online exclusives, such as fun and informative videos and podcasts on *Wearablesmag.com*, online courses and webinars on *ASICentral.com* and social media chatter on Facebook and Twitter.



VIDEO: Vested Interest. From the outdoors to the office, vests have a place in any promotional apparel program. *Wearables* Editor C.J. Mittica examines the various types of vests in this trend video.

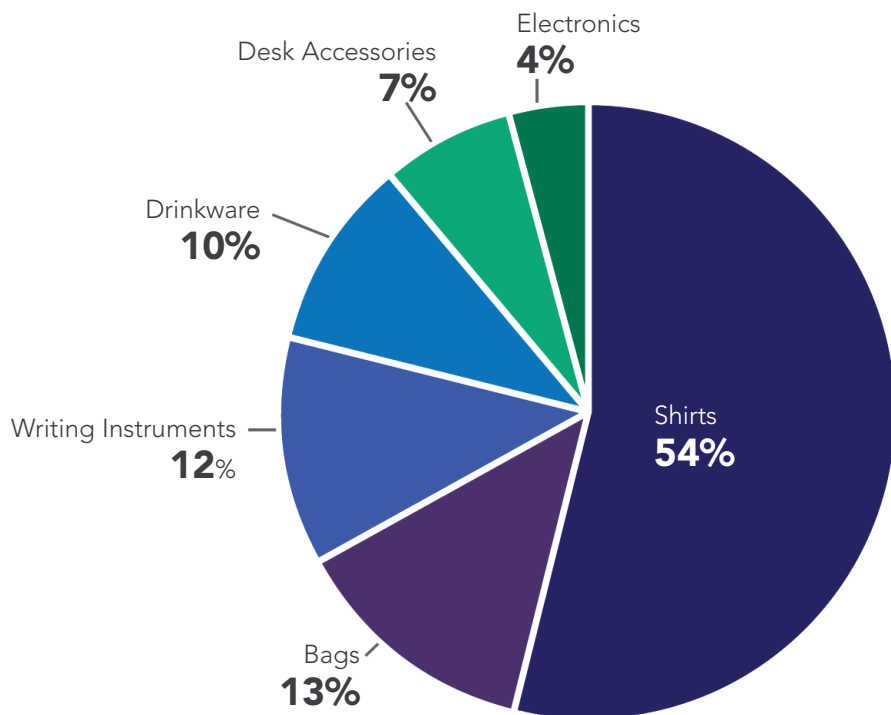


VIDEO: Winner Winner, Chicken Dinner. In this issue you'll see the winners for our prestigious Apparel Design Awards. But check out our video for a close-up look at some of the top garments in the contest.

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

ONLINE POLL

On *ASICentral.com*, we asked, "What was your top-selling product of 2012?"



WEARABLES

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The most outstanding selection of apparel, headwear and bags available from a single source, from basic t-shirts to performance apparel to the latest trends. And that includes adding new brands like **Alternative**, and energizing a few favorites like **LAT Sportswear**, with new styles for men, youth and toddlers.

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3507 T-shirt

asi/84358

A Year of Innovations, Advancements and Connections

BY TIM ANDREWS



It's become my annual tradition to write distributors in our industry to thank them for their business and to tell them what ASI® accomplished during the year on their behalf.

As president and CEO, I take ASI's responsibility as a leader seriously, making sure we're continually introducing and perfecting innovative, on-the-go technology.

Throughout 2012, our technology team worked at high velocity to make our online, desktop and mobile solutions faster, simpler and more intuitive, launching four major new product lines and introducing over 100 new features across the entire ESP® platform.

Today, an incredible 72% of all product searches in the industry are conducted in ESP, concrete proof of its importance in the marketplace.

In 10 critical areas important to our 26,000 members, ASI continues to lead the industry, remaining No. 1 in total distributors, research services, website solutions, show attendance and exhibitors, editorial awards, magazine and catalog circulation, education, credit information and trusted, transparent ratings. At the same time, we attracted even more quality suppliers, adding nearly 600 this year alone.

Across all fronts, 2012 was a game-changer for ASI and our distributor members. Here are the highlights:

Product Innovations

- Launched ESP Mobile™ for the iPad, iPhone and Android, free for all ESP subscribers.
- ESP Websites™ for distributors set an all-time record high for user adoptions in an ASI product launch.
- Released ASI SmartLink™ to allow larger distributors to build a complete custom e-commerce solution using product data from ESP, ESP Websites and ESP Mobile.
- Launched Company Stores in ESP Websites, providing one-click branding, allowing you to upload your customer's logo once and see it instantly applied to all virtual sample-ready products in your store.

Connecting Buyers & Sellers

- Produced five successful ASI Shows™ in Orlando, Dallas, New York, Chicago and San Diego. With ASI Orlando and ASI Dallas growing, distributor attendance across all five shows totaled 18,872 attendees – with 376 unique, new companies exhibiting.

- Hosted four Virtual Trade Shows, providing opportunities for suppliers and distributors to do business efficiently without leaving their offices.
- Formed PromoAlliance with Sourcing City and PSI, a new international alliance to foster increased communication, education and understanding throughout the U.S., U.K. and European markets.

Education

- Released the Global Advertising Specialties Impressions Study V.3, the third landmark ASI research study proving promotional products consistently rank among the most influential, enduring and cost-effective ad mediums available.
- Helped educate over 23,000 industry members through the free Advertising Specialty Institute Certification Program.
- Scored international coverage of the industry with a 1,000-word page-one profile in the 2 million circulation *Wall Street Journal*.

Publishing Excellence

- ASI magazines won 12 awards for editorial and design excellence, including a national award for *Stitches*' "State of the Industry" issue. Our magazine circulation is audited and growing, and *Counselor*'s collection of top lists are now the industry standard.
- Redesigned *Advantages*® and *Counselor*® magazines in order to showcase innovative content aimed at business leaders competing in our fast-paced marketplace.

As we charge into 2013, we're energized about changes we're making to ASI Shows and our continued major investment in products, services and technology. Soon you'll see an all-new ESP and ESP Web Presentations, as well as speak to search in ESP Mobile.

But we don't take our leadership position lightly. The competition challenges us every day, making us stronger and compelling us to provide sales and marketing tools none of us could even have imagined five years ago.

If there's anything more ASI can do to promote your success, please don't hesitate to e-mail me at tim.andrews@asicentral.com.

Regards,

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Product of Success

BY C.J. MITTICA



You've heard the axiom "People buy from people." It cuts to the core of what it takes to be a successful salesperson. Be likable and engaging. Listen intently and ask probing question to find out what matters most. Provide solutions that are creative and distinct. Much of that reflects back on the sales rep.

While all of that is true, it's only part of the truth. Because in the advertising specialty industry, product matters. Great product choices differentiate the successful distributors and decorators. They do the research to find the on-trend products and then customize it specifically to the event or use. People skills get you in the door and suss out the information that matters most. Product determines whether you make good on it. It informs the entire life of the sales relationship.

This issue features 213 great products:

147 finalists from our 6th Apparel Design Awards. Across 13 categories, our industry's top suppliers submitted a truly impressive range of garments that anyone would be proud to own. Special congratulations go to our winners and first and second runner-ups, who are featured in the pages of these issues. I urge you to go to www.wearablesmag.com to check out the rest of the finalists, because they are also worthy of your attention.

Great product choices differentiate the successful distributors and decorators. They do the research to find the on-trend products and then customize it specifically to the event or use.

8 synergistic products from our "Crossed Paths" feature on cross-selling. We tend to think about wearables in their own little bubble, but in reality distributor salespeople are pitching both apparel and hard goods because that's what their clients demand. Our feature talks about the interaction between the two categories and how they can boost your sales.

6 bags from our "Baggage Claim" feature. Not only do bags generate the most user impressions in the United States, but it's an item everyone can use. Our article identifies the leading trends in bags and the best way to pitch them.

Of course, there are dozens of other great products scattered throughout this issue. Find one item that inspires

you and helps close a sale and start off the new year right. Good luck in 2013.

Thanks for reading,

Charles J Mitten

WHAT'S IN MY CLOSET?

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

This issue, our submission comes from John Simonetta, chief marketing officer for Proforma Green Marketing:

"The 2012 ASI Global Impressions Study showed that 50% of consumers in Dallas own a promotional T-shirt vs. the 43% national average. The 2008 ASI Impression study revealed that T-shirts average 365 impressions (views) a month. I say a T-shirt is a lot harder to lose than a business card, and distributor self-promotion via T-shirts is a great idea. Especially with the self-promo pricing Proforma gets from folks like Chris Harris at TSF Sportswear (asi/90522).

"For example, I like what we did with this 520 Anvil 5.5 oz. recycled cotton blend T-shirt. Simple message on the front of the shirt as a conversation starter, and all our contact and social media links on the back. The sustainable recycled cotton reflects our company, that we are Proforma Green Marketing, and it is a super comfy T-shirt, so clients like to wear it.

"It makes sense to have some T-shirts available both for giveaways, and also just to wear around. You never know where your next prospect is going to come from, and since we are all in the promo business, taking the time to promote ourselves should be a no brainer."



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FASHIONSENSE

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

BY ALISSA TALLMAN



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STYLE TIPS

Knit Apparel

Knits are dominating high-fashion circles this winter. From Stella McCartney's knitted suits and dresses to Dries Van Noten's sweaters for men and even a cable-knit tunic from Prada, knits have established themselves as apparel essentials in a considerable variety of styles.

"People want to live in knit garments," says Brad Winter, corporate sales manager at Ouray Sportswear (*asi/75402*). "By nature, knits are soft and supple, so they're comfortable and can be worn next to the skin." Winter also describes knitwear as being a great asset to the promotional industry, as it's appropriate for both small-scale and large-scale events. "Knitwear runs the spectrum with regard to price points, and it decorates well, offering tremendous brand exposure," he says. "By virtue of these traits, knit apparel proves to be an excellent choice for a promotional campaign."

Kimberly Lutz, owner of LutzCo Inc. (*asi/68193*), also commends knits for their

branding potential and affordability. "Knits can be easily decorated for any kind of advertising or branding campaign," she says. "Knit shirts and hats, for example, are inexpensive and easy to imprint with a logo." She suggests several markets to consider for possible clients, including construction and government/military, and recommends warehouse clientele as well.

Winter mentions a wide range of industries that knitwear apparel can be effectively applied to. "Industries whose employees are performing physical work, whether indoors or outdoors, would do well to consider knit apparel," he says. He explains that knitwear products are ideal for such employees due to their flexibility and warmth. "From a garment productivity standpoint, knits offer the comfort and freedom of movement necessary to perform in a physically-demanding environment."

Fashion Tip ▶

Knitwear makes for a great look when combined with sleek, textured fabrics such as leather or suede. Consider a knit scarf with a leather jacket or a cable-knit sweater under a suede jacket.



Scarf

LutzCo Inc. (*asi/68193*; circle 95 on Free Info Card) carries this cozy rib-knit scarf (A351) in black, canyon brown, moss and navy.



Cardigan

Tri-Mountain (*asi/92125*; circle 96 on Free Info Card) distributes this stylish cotton cabled women's cardigan (LB923) in black, charcoal, deep navy and latte.



Beanie

This striped acrylic knit beanie (55016) is available at Ouray Sportswear (*asi/75402*; circle 97 on Free Info Card) in a variety of colors and styles.



Vest

This unisex fine gauge V-neck sweater vest (6433) from A+ Career Apparel & Image-wear (*asi/84835*; circle 136 on Free Info Card) is perfect for layering. It's made of 100% acrylic, features rib trim at the waist and is available in navy or black.

HOT HUE

Orange

Vivid, saucy and ripe with possibility, orange adds a touch of vibrancy to winter's neutrals and dark hues. A color that can't fail to be noticed, whether up close or at a distance, orange is tailor-made for the promotional arena and is one of this season's hottest apparel shades. Take your pick between the latest fashions from Carolina Herrera, Mulberry or Prada – all three designers are showcasing tangerine-themed products ranging from coats to handbags to hats.

Jessica Strain, sales and marketing coordinator for Dri Duck Traders Inc. (asi/50835), recommends this color for its ability to infuse promotional attire with a certain warmth and zest. "Orange is definitely on trend for the season, so any company that considers itself fashion-forward should add this hue to its next promotion," she says. "It's great to use in a promotional campaign because it adds a pop

of color to any industry that typically uses a lot of black and gray." Strain mentions several markets in which orange has an established presence. "Orange is popular in the education industry and appeals to all levels, from elementary to collegiate markets," she notes. "Other shades, such as 'safety' and 'blaze' orange, appeal to the construction and hunting industries, where they are used as part of daily uniforms for safety purposes."

Juanne Kochhar, vice president of Ashlin BPG Marketing (asi/37138), is also a fan of orange for its association with vitality and action. "Orange is an excellent color," she says. "It's perceived as a high-energy color and is thus linked with high-energy promotions." Kochhar adds that the hue is symbolic of movement as well as youth. She mentions the sports, food

◀ Fashion Tip

One of the most stunning ways to integrate orange into an outfit or logo is to pair it with cobalt or dark navy, which will act as a neutral in the pairing.



↖ Tie

Wolfmark (asi/98085; circle 92 on Free Info Card) carries this royal blue and orange tie (BOGD-058-676), which would be a sure conversation starter in any setting.

and beverage and health industries as being regular users of this color, and also suggests colleges/universities and companies involved in communications as ideal potential candidates to pitch it to.



Hoodie

This cozy cotton/polyester women's zip-front hoodie (100223) is available from Antigua Group Inc (asi/36320; circle 91 on Free Info Card).



Wallet Pouch

Ashlin BPG Marketing (asi/37138; circle 94 on Free Info Card) distributes this charming cowhide wristlet wallet pouch (B9106-48-37).



Jacket

Part nano-fleece, part polyester, this snug anti-static men's jacket (7396) can be found at Dri Duck Traders Inc (asi/50835; circle 93 on Free Info Card).



LOOKS WE LOVE

Soft-Shell Microfleece Jacket

This sporty and sleek men's soft-shell microfleece jacket (19406) hails from Trimark Sportswear (asi/92122; circle 107 on Free Info Card) and makes a fantastic addition to either casual or corporate outfits. It's got the kind of notable class that allows the wearer to dress down a notch but still maintain an air of professionalism. Waterproof, lightweight and attractive, the jacket is available in black and dark charcoal. It features a zip and snap front, a detachable hood and roomy side pockets. It fits comfortably and still manages to have plenty of room for layering underneath. Because the product is sold blank, it's ideal for logo imprinting or embroidery. Whether a company is considering revamping its uniforms or is interested in investing in award incentives for employees, this jacket is a standout choice.



Corporate Meeting

When paired with this cotton/polyester pinstripe dress shirt (LS-SG-36) from Assertive Creativity LLC (asi/37166; circle 108 on Free Info Card) and these relaxed-fit jeans (B460) from Broberry Mfg Inc. (asi/42057; circle 109 on Free Info Card), the jacket serves as a complementary piece that cements the entire ensemble together. It's also light enough to be comfortably worn indoors, so it doesn't have to be left behind in the coat room.



Outdoor Fundraiser

Combine the jacket with this sheer vintage tee (20024) from Ouray Sportswear (asi/75402; circle 97 on Free Info Card), layering underneath with this long-sleeve thermal henley (T457) from American Apparel (asi/35297; circle 110 on Free Info Card). Then add these khakis (B324) from Broberry Mfg Inc. (asi/42057; circle 109 on Free Info Card). This outfit provides two different opportunities for embroidery and/or imprinting – the jacket and the tee. Consider offering a limited number of imprinted jackets as raffle giveaways at the fundraiser and stock up on embroidered tees, which supporters will definitely want once they see them on organization representatives.

College Sports Event

Pair the jacket with this suave lightweight hoodie (31038) from Ouray Sportswear (asi/75402; circle 97 on Free Info Card) and add this retro twill cap with torn visor (1021) from Hit Promotional Products (asi/61125; circle 105 on Free Info Card). Each separate piece in this ensemble is imprintable; thus, this outfit offers enormous potential for brand promotion, whether it's a team, a school or a specific event that's in the spotlight.



TREND SPY

Stripes

The fashion industry is awash in stripes this season. Corneliani has a gorgeous array of men's sweaters featuring stripes, and the 2013 lineups for both Burberry Prorsum and Ralph Lauren include a plethora of striped apparel. Refreshing and visually memorable, stripes personalize promotional apparel and imbue it with extra pizzazz.

Nancy Robitaille, apparel and headwear designer for Fersten Worldwide Inc. (asi/53974), explains why stripes make an effective addition to all promotional wear, regardless of the event type. "Stripes – especially those of different colors for the same product – are eye-catching and nicely accent company logos," she says. Labeling them fun, colorful and trendy, she adds that stripes have attention-grabbing capabilities. "Striped

apparel can be an asset for all industries," she says. "Athletic teams are focusing on this style as well as companies that want to think out of the box and give their employees garments that are lifestyle-driven, not singularly promotionally driven."

Similarly, Susan Kohout, spokesperson for Dickies Occupational Wear (asi/49675), finds that stripes endow garments with personality and flair that are applicable in both event-related and corporate settings. "Stripes add dimension in a sea of solid apparel," she explains. "They also add interest." She points out the potential for incorporating stripes into uniform programs: "Stripes can easily dress up a uniform, such as in a service application, and also be used as a differentiator between various jobs in any given work setting."



Polo

This fitted nylon/spandex women's striped polo shirt (FA5540) from Fersten Worldwide Inc. (asi/53974; circle 101 on Free Info Card) is moisture-wicking and antimicrobial. Choose from Fila navy/white stripe and silver/white stripe



Hoodie

This whimsical striped women's pullover hoodie (FL079) is available from Dickies Occupational Wear (asi/49675; circle 99 on Free Info Card).



Warm-Up Pants

Augusta Sportswear (asi/37461; circle 100 on Free Info Card) distributes these heavyweight medalist warm-up pants (7755). Choose from a range of color combinations, including black/Vegas gold, brown/white, red/white and purple/white.



Racing Jacket

Broder Bros. Co. (asi/42090; circle 102 on Free Info Card) carries this splendid men's ClimaProof racing jacket (A69) in several colors, including navy/white/sterling and zucchini/black/sterling.

Fashion Tip

Because of the small size and affordability of business-card cases, this accessory provides companies with a convenient way to unveil a new, updated logo as well as showcase it.

ACCESSORIES

Business-Card Cases

There's no such thing as a generic business-card case anymore. The promotional market offers numerous chic and sleek designs that guarantee end-users will not just eagerly use their card case of choice, but enthusiastically display it as well. The style options are endless, from metal to plastic to leather, embellished with a logo or brandishing a little glitz with a subtle rhinestone design.

"Nearly every businessperson requires a business-card case to house their most precious commodity – a contact card," says Phil Kahan, CEO of Andrew Philips/Millennium Leather (*asi/36205*). "When you are engaged with another businessperson and you need to reach for a business card, how do you wish to represent yourself? A well-made leather card case exemplifies quality. It is part of the picture an individual creates of himself or herself."

Andrew Boss, national sales manager for A T Cross Company (*asi/47520*), agrees. "It is nearly impossible to attend a meeting, event or trade show without someone requesting a business card from you," he says. "Much like a fine writing instrument, a business-card case will be used on a regular basis and, unless of shoddy quality, will last for years. It benefits not only the recipient, but the gift-giver's brand for years to come, long after the event it was given for."

Kahan also emphasizes the longevity factor associated with card cases and how valuable this factor is in regard to company and brand promotion. "Advertising is a method of continually reinforcing brand awareness," he says. "A leather card case has enduring value because it lasts, it's prestigious, and it's a statement of style, organization and success."



Saturn Holder

Take a look at Hit Promotional Products (*asi/61125*; circle 105 on Free Info Card) for stylish card cases like this one (4830), which is available in a wide range of colors, including Kelly green, orange, pink and yellow.



Leather Card Holder

This attractive leather card holder (C3F940) features several pockets on the inside, including one that holds a passport, and is available from A T Cross Company (*asi/47520*; circle 103 on Free Info Card).



Flip-Top Case

Leed's (*asi/66887*; circle 106 on Free Info Card) carries this unique ultra-hyde "flip-top" case (3000-09).



Envelope-Style Case

Andrew Philips/Millennium Leather (*asi/36205*; circle 104 on Free Info Card) carries this leather, envelope-style case holder (1532FN) in a variety of fashionably bright colors, such as ocean blue, pumpkin orange and violet purple.

celebrity *style*

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



Photographer: Gilbert Carrasquillo

▲ Brandon Routh

This *Superman Returns* star is sporting true hipster-casual dress in this ensemble, donning several pieces of trendy apparel, from the gray-heather hoodie to the retro-styled tee, worn-in jeans and gym sneakers. The outfit is effectively balanced in terms of color, with neutral blues and grays as its foundation and just a touch of yellow in the "center." It lends the celebrity a soothing presence as well as approachability. Ouray Sportswear ([asi/75402](#)) offers an impressive inventory of retro print tees like Routh's, and both American Apparel ([asi/35297](#)) and NES Clothing Co. ([asi/72808](#)) carry similarly styled hoodies for men.



Photographer: Frederick M. Brown

▲ Felicity Jones

This film star makes an optimal use of neutrals in this comfortable yet stylish outfit. The form-fitting black cigarette pants are perfectly paired with the slightly oversized gray sweater, providing an effective color contrast. Jones' auburn hair practically acts as a third neutral, contributing a reddish earth tone and thus a hint of color to the outfit. Although Jones is petite, the sweater doesn't swallow her up because the skinny jeans extend her frame. Harvest Industrial & Trade Co. Ltd. ([asi/61670](#)) distributes a few cigarette-pant styles, and sweaters like this one can be found at Edwards Garment ([asi/51752](#)).

TRADE SHOW CALENDAR

JANUARY 2013

Jan. 5-7, Orlando The ASI Show

(800) 546-3300;
www.asishow.com

Jan. 5-8, Oaks, PA Philadelphia Gift Show

(678) 285-3976; www.philadelphiagiftshow.com

Jan. 13-16, Marlboro, MA New England Apparel Club Show

(781) 326-9223;
www.neacshow.com

Jan. 15-16, New York City Indigo Show

(646) 351-1942;
www.indigo-salon.com

Jan. 17-20, Seattle Seattle Gift Show

(678) 285-3976;
www.seattlegiftshow.com

Jan. 18-20, Long Beach, CA ISS Shows

(508) 743-0532;
www.issshows.com

Jan. 19-21, Orlando Orlando Gift Show

(678) 285-3976; www.orlandogiftshow.com

Jan. 21-25, Boston, Long Island, Secaucus, NJ, Philadelphia, Baltimore Advantages Roadshow

(800) 546-3300;
www.advantagesroadshow.com

Jan. 26-30, New York City New York International Gift Fair

(800) 272-7469;
www.nyigf.com

Jan 27-31, Toronto, ON Toronto Gift Show

(800) 611-6100; www.torontogiftshow.org

FEBRUARY 2013

Feb 1-2, New York City Manhattan Vintage Clothing Show & Sale

(518) 852-2415; <http://manhattanvintage.com>

Feb. 6-8, Dallas, TX The ASI Show

(800) 546-3300;
www.asishow.com

Feb. 11-15, Seattle, Portland, Sacramento, San Jose, San Francisco Advantages Roadshow

(800) 546-3300;
www.advantagesroadshow.com

Feb. 12-13, Nashville, TN PPAMS MidSouth PromoShow

(615) 465-8109;
www.ppams.com

Feb. 15-16, Columbus, OH Embroidery Trade Show

(800) 866-7396;
www.nnep.net

Feb. 16-19, San Francisco San Francisco International Gift Fair

(678) 285-3976;
www.sfigf.com

Feb. 17-20, Edmonton, AB Alberta Gift Show

(800) 611-6100;
www.albertagiftshow.org

Feb. 18-24, Washington, DC DC Fashion Week

(202) 600-9274;
www.dcfashionweek.org

Feb. 21, St. Paul, MN UMAPP's Fire & Ice Booth Show

(651) 734-9767;
www.umapp.org

I Believe...

The who, what and wear of industry experts

BY JILL ALBERS, AS TOLD TO CHRISTOPHER RUVO

Jill Albers

- New Business Development Executive at Shumsky (*asi/326300*) and Boost Rewards
- Named to *Counselor* magazine's 2010 Hot List
- Enhanced brand recognition for a long list of distinguished clients through promotional product campaigns, incentive programs, direct mail and package design

... This will be 2013's most popular accessory: Scarves. Scarves are so hot right now for men and women, and you can brand them in subtle ways.

... I'm targeting these markets:

Technology, retail, manufacturing – these vertical markets have been on the upswing for promotional spending over the last few years. During the economic downturn, these industries held back on marketing budgets. Now, companies that have gained market share are marketing in a big way.

... I've got a thing for Quidditch players:

I am a huge Harry Potter fan. The movies transport me back and I could watch re-runs forever.

... In mastering the art of delegation:

If you want to be successful, you have to delegate. No one person can do everything. I have an amazing team of people who I not only trust, but also count on daily to serve my clients.

... You have to stand by your (client's) brand:

When it comes to apparel embellishment, it all depends on the brand. I have clients that want to get as "out there" as pos-

sible, and I have clients that embrace tradition. I think that it's important to be true to the brand first and foremost, no matter what the trend is.

... Trendspotting is best done across the pond:

Europe is always a little more fashion-forward, so I research European retail trends to get inspiration for creative design ideas. I also follow retail trends nationally, and read ASI publications to stay on the cusp.

... Low-balling hurts us all: Some distributors are selling at a much lower profitability because they are new to the market or don't focus on the promotional vertical as their core business. This in return alters the

perceived value of promotional products in end-users' eyes. Still, I love this industry. I love coming up with the next great promotion for my clients' goals. I need a challenge, and in this industry you reinvent yourself daily depending on who you are working with and what you are working on.

... I'm a 'closet' clean freak: One thing people would be surprised to know about me is that I'm a clean freak. I organize my closet to relieve stress. Cleaning and organization make my fast-paced life easier.

... I have some advice for the freshmen:

Find a mentor and ask, ask, ask! This industry has so many quirks and it's all about who you know. You need someone you can trust to help you navigate through the first few years. Be a sponge and just listen; sometimes it's the little tricks that help the most!

... I am a creative caregiver:

If I weren't doing this job, I'd be a stay-at-home mom or a fashion designer – or I would open an art gallery.

... Sometimes, work is art: I recently collaborated with a fine artist who was local to the corporate headquarters of a technology company I work with. The organization wanted to thank clients that met a certain sales level. We worked with the artist to create a piece that not only represented the brand, but also what the customer meant to the company. We added creative packaging and a custom hang tag to add a high-end perceived value, all at a price under \$15. The client was ecstatic and also was happy they didn't have to worry about art or concept.

... Downtime is overrated: When I'm not working, you'll probably find me being active. Biking, walking, taking the kids to the park, running – you name it, I like it.



CHEAT SHEET

From novice to expert in five questions

By Shane Dale

DISCHARGE PRINTING



While discharge printing works best on natural fibers, both cotton/poly and tri-blend shirts can produce excellent decorations, such as this tri-blend decoration from Real Thread (circle 117 on Free Info Card).
photo courtesy of Real Thread

1 What is discharge printing, and what do customers like about it?

“Discharge printing, in layman’s terms, is the bleaching out of the fabric color in the garment,” says Shane Matthew Stiles, operations manager at decorator Threadbird Printing Co. “The color left behind is dependent upon the discharge option used. You can opt for clear (which will leave the color of the shirt prior to being dyed), white discharge, or a pigmented discharge to add color.”

Real Thread, a screen printer that specializes in water-based and discharge printing, uses a pigment discharge that strips out the dyed color and re-dyes it to create an image on the garment. “It really comes down to the soft hand that you’re able to let it maintain,” says Dru Dalton, chief threader at Real Thread. “With discharge printing, you’re able to make it stay just as soft as it is naturally and still get that image on there. There is good Plastisol printing out there where it’s still soft, but it’s not as soft as that natural shirt really is.” As Dalton points out, the image becomes “part of the shirt”

because all that’s being done is re-dying the fabric. “You’re not adding a separate entity – in most cases, Plastisol ink – on the shirt to create the image,” he says.

Dan Corcoran, owner of Forward Printing, says discharge printing can be used to print colors on dark garments that would have previously required an additional layer of white ink in order to “achieve the proper opacity” of top colors. “You’ve probably seen many shirts with a very soft print that looks like the color of natural cotton. This is discharge printing,” he says.

There are some potential drawbacks that distributors should recognize. “Shirt colors like purple, royal blue, lapis, Kelly green, forest, red, teal and turquoise are especially problematic with discharge,” Stiles says. “We’re still waiting on garment manufacturers to catch up to ink manufacturers and start using dyes for those colors that are printer-friendly.”

2 On what fabrics can discharge printing be performed?

Plain and simple, natural fabrics (specifically cotton, though other fibers like bamboo and hemp also apply) work best with discharge printing. “Fabric content and color have the largest bearing on the print results,” Corcoran says.

That does not mean, however, that discharge printing can’t be used on synthetic garments. It won’t work on 100% polyester garments, but blends are certainly fair game. “We print cotton/poly blends and tri-blends all day long,” Dalton says. If both the cotton and poly are dyed in a 50/50 shirt, then the print will appear muted and “vintage” (since the dye can’t be displaced from the polyester). In a 50/50 shirt

where the poly isn’t dyed (think heathers), the print will be more vibrant. Dalton educates clients on the widespread idea that cotton/poly blends are not dischargeable. “We’re about to shoot a video to help dispel that myth,” he says. “It’s completely false.”

One of Dalton’s favorite shirts that Real Thread decorated was a soft cotton/poly blend shirt with a discharge print. “The client originally came to us because they were unhappy with their thick and heavy Plastisol prints,” he says. “We introduced them to our discharge printing and they immediately became hooked.”

The large design featured a large number

22 (because it was 22 inches tall) in multiple colors. “With the super-soft cotton/poly blend shirt, they didn’t want the design being thick and heavy. On top of that, they didn’t want a vintage-looking print, which is very common on cotton/poly blends and discharge ink,” Dalton says. The solution was a 65/35 cotton/poly tee (6200) from Next Level Apparel (*asi/73867*), where only the cotton is dyed. “We were able to discharge the brown cotton, utilize the white polyester, and re-dye the fabric with their Pantone colors,” Dalton says. “They were super stoked, and it’s been one of their best sellers since releasing it.”

3 What kinds of discharge-printed apparel are people buying?

T-Shirts: As with many embellishment methods, T-shirts are number one for discharge printing, according to Corcoran. “In our experience, people are mostly buying cotton T-shirts and sweatshirts for discharge printing,” he says.

Hoodies: Dalton also points out that discharge works great over zippers, which makes hoodies an attractive option, even though the majority of his business deals with fashion tees.

Fleece: Cold-weather fleece is not out of the realm of possibility, though Stiles says it works best when the fabric content is not too heavily skewed to polyester. Other accessories are out. “Most accessories,” Stiles says, “contain too high of a level of polyester for discharge inks to work well with them.”

4 What kinds of customers/industries should I target with my discharge-printed apparel?

Corcoran says his discharge-printing clientele ranges from schools to gyms and even the service industry. But most of all, he says the high perceived value of discharge-printed apparel makes it a good fit at retail. “These designs often go on the more boutique garment brands,” he says. “Most of our work for retail is discharge and water-based inks.”

Discharge is perfectly suited for a youthful demographic. Dalton finds continued success with the younger “surf/skate” crowd. “They seem to love discharge because they love a super-soft shirt, and discharge lets them have that shirt right out of the box,” he says.

These young customers really enjoy oversized, jumbo, allover discharge prints, Dalton adds. “The bigger it is, the heavier the shirt is going to become, and the more restrictive it’s going to feel if you have a thicker Plastisol print on there,” he says. “So, a big, allover design is obviously a great fit for discharge.”



Discharge printing removes the original dye from the T-shirt and then adds a decoration that leaves no hand, as evidenced with this white discharge ink decoration from Forward Printing (circle 126 on Free Info Card).

photo courtesy of Forward Printing

5 Are there mixed-media opportunities?

Dalton says his shop receives requests for a number of embellishment methods that work well in conjunction with discharge prints. “We do a lot of burnout with it, we do a lot of foil, and we do a lot of glow-in-the-dark inks,” he says.

Corcoran agrees that foil embellishment is a popular side-by-side option with discharge prints. “Since the print is so soft,” he says, “a multimedia approach with embroidery and discharge printing looks great, as well.”



Using a 65/35 cotton/poly shirt (6200) from Next Level Apparel (asi/73867; circle 152 on Free Info Card), decorator Real Thread (circle 117 on Free Info Card) created a vibrant discharge print. On cotton/poly shirts, discharge prints will come out brighter if the polyester is originally undyed.

photo courtesy of Real Thread



While plastisol inks require an additional layer of white ink over dark garments for proper print opacity, discharge inks can achieve the effect with less ink and no hand to the garment, as demonstrated in this shirt from Forward Printing (circle 126 on Free Info Card).

photo courtesy of Forward Printing

Your Brand Of Communications

Developing customer loyalty is all in the brand.

BY RYAN T. SAUERS



Ryan T. Sauers is president/owner of Sauers Consulting Strategies, whose focus is on growing graphics- and promotional products-related businesses. He founded the independent consulting firm after nearly 20 years of leading such companies. His book *Everyone Is in Sales* can be ordered through Amazon.com. For more information or to contact Ryan, visit ryansauers.com or e-mail him at ryan@ryansauers.com.

We communicate a message in everything we do – and it’s especially true when we use the term “brand.” All the time we discuss brands we prefer and those we do not. Why? Because brands stand out in our minds. Think about our instant recognition of Nike’s “Just Do It” or Apple’s “there’s an APP for that” campaign. These messages are effective in connecting customers with the brand. The goal is to make such a brand experience personal in nature. For example, are you a McDonald’s or Burger King person? Coke or Pepsi person? You get the idea.

How to explain a brand? You can say it is the sum total of key ideas, emotions and perceptions that are communicated to your audience and associated with your organization’s work. When your stakeholders reflect upon their experiences with your organization, the brand is the “shorthand” way of summing up those characteristics and feelings.

To help simplify this subject, I have developed an acronym: A **BRAND** can be considered the **B**arometer reading of one’s **R**eputation, **A**tttributes, **N**ame and **D**istinctiveness. Reputation is all your organization stands for; attributes are the characteristics others use when describing you; your name suggests something (good, bad or indifferent) when a person hears it; and your distinctiveness answers the question, “Why you? What makes you different or unique?”

So the question is not if we have a brand or not, because we do. All organizations have a brand. Instead, the question is: What do we do with our brand? In short, our brand is not defined by what we say it is, but is characterized by what others say it is. To that end, successful organizations work hard to develop their brands through effective communications. Always remember that building a strong, recognizable, reliable and consistent brand takes time, effort and commitment. Simply said, it requires a deliberate, purposeful and intentional strategy. It pays off with brand loyalty – one of the most valuable assets any organization can have. Quite frankly, it explains why customers will pay more for our goods and services.

Here are five things the promotional products and wearables industry should consider as it relates to the concept of “branding.”

1. **Refrain from saying that “promotional products are still relevant.”** Of course they are. The market has simply changed, as has the entire world. I argue that such products are more useful than ever – and trust me, I spend a lot of time in the social and new media world.
2. **Please don’t get caught up with** feeling you must refer to yourself as a “marketing” or “communications solutions” company. This should be what you do, not what you are.
3. **Don’t become overwhelmed with social and emerging media.** Always remember it is all about the psychology, not the technology. These are simply new ways to communicate. If used correctly, they are assets, not threats. They are tools, but not the only tools, in your marketing mix.

“The question is not if we have a brand or not, because we do. All organizations have a brand. Instead, the question is: What do we do with our brand?”

4. **Determine what it is you are best at**, embrace it and then build and promote your brand around it. Shout it from the mountaintops, print it, e-mail it, tweet it, etc. Always be authentic in all of your communications.
5. **Remember, your brand is that “extra value” you provide** and the reason a customer stays with you over similar competitors or offerings in the market.

When pondering your brand, you must first determine what it is all about. Obtain feedback from those around you as a first step. Be sure to obtain this 360-degree feedback from those close to you as well as those who are more removed from you.

Once you know what your brand is, you can determine the ways you want to purposefully grow, change, re-frame, promote and/or strengthen your current brand position. So, how do you define your brand? Does it matter? You bet! Remember, we all have a brand and there is no better time than now to address it.

BUSINESS TOOLKIT

Build a better business

BY CHRISTOPHER RUVO

Turn A Wrong Into A Right

Eventually an order will go wrong; the way you handle it makes all the difference.

Despite your best efforts, it's inevitable that something will go wrong on an order at some point. Perhaps the mistake is your fault; maybe it isn't. Either way, if you want to keep the client, it's pivotal that you handle the situation correctly. If you do, you can potentially save the deal and build trust with a customer, increasing his or her loyalty to you.

To navigate the troubled waters successfully, start by accepting responsibility and letting customers have their say – even if that means taking a bit of a tongue lashing at the outset. “Put yourself in the customer’s shoes and respond in a way that shows you sincerely care about his or her issue,” says John Tschohl, a customer service strategist who authored *Achieving Excellence Through Customer Service*. “No matter who is at fault,

“No matter who is at fault, apologize without assigning blame.”

JOHN TSCHOHL

apologize without assigning blame. Don't get into a fight ... even if the person really gets under your skin.”

Responsibility accepted, you can begin your most pivotal work: finding a viable solution. Recently, Mike Welker, senior account executive at Mason, OH-based Touchstone Merchandise Group (*asi/345631*), did just that for an important client with six-figure spending power. Things went awry after it became apparent there was an issue with getting the proper imprint to take on a 60,000-piece order of slap bracelets. Angry at Welker, the customer told him not to bother trying to fix

the issue, adding that the organization would never buy from him again. But Welker was committed to coming through. He contacted a trusted supplier and worked closely with the company to find a similar product that would work. The items were rushed in, and the client received the imprinted order on time. While Welker's margins suffered on this particular campaign, he preserved the relationship with the client. And, the following month, the customer placed a \$15,000 order. “When something goes wrong, it can actually be an opportunity,” says Welker.

Like Welker, the team at New Berlin, WI-based Caliendo Savio Enterprises (*asi/155807*) makes it a top priority to rectify problems. In the rare instances when customers aren't happy with a product, they can return it, says Chief Operating Officer Mark Ziskind. In other cases, CSE may offer discounts or credit. And, of course, the distributor will pull out all the stops to ensure any rocky patches in an order are smoothed in the end.

While setting things right can earn a client's loyalty, failing to do so opens the door for other distributors to swoop in and snap up your business. Recently, a telecommunications company called CSE, desperate for help. Another vendor had failed to deliver an order of 700 decorated sweatshirts on time, and the company needed the garments the next day for a New York event. Could CSE help? You betcha. Because of its in-house decorating capabilities and quick access to crew-neck sweatshirts, the distributor was able to decorate and ship the order overnight. Says Ziskind: “Whether it's fixing an issue, helping a client in the clutch, or something else, you win business by being nimble, adaptable and resourceful.”

MASTERING MISTAKES

Mistakes happen. Nonetheless, here are steps you can take to minimize their occurrence and, when problems do arise, handle them in a way that preserves your relationship with a client.

Partner With Quality Suppliers And

Decorators: Even the best partners will slip up, but good suppliers and decorators will keep the mistakes to a minimum and help you make things right for your client when issues occur.

Really Know Your Clients: Thoroughly understand their operations, goals and recurring initiatives. This can help you anticipate problems.

Strive For Early Delivery: Whenever possible, have product delivered far enough in advance for you to deal with potential issues without a next-day deadline staring you in the face.

Avoid the Blame Game: Whether the fault lies with a supplier, the customer or you, pointing fingers is counterproductive. Instead, accept responsibility and exercise a little empathy for your client, says John Tschohl, a nationally-recognized customer service strategist.

Make It Right: This is the crux of the matter. Understand what you can do, within reason, to rectify an issue and then pull out the stops to deliver. Doing so could be the difference between maintaining and losing a client.

LEARN IT LIVE!

Want to learn more about putting clients at ease? Be sure to attend "Comfortable Customers Buy: Using Buyer Psychology" at **The ASI Show** Dallas (Wednesday, February 6, 3:15 p.m.). Learn why "sales words" are your enemy and how customers are uncomfortable with old sales techniques.

No Need For Concern

Anticipating and addressing client concerns are key to keeping clients loyal.

Even the best consultative sellers will run into situations where clients, new and longstanding, have concerns about a project you're working on with them. It could be anything and everything, from whether the items will run on time to doubts about the true effectiveness of promotional products. How you handle those concerns – how you manage the client's perceived risk in the situation – can be the difference between securing and losing the sale, as well as maintaining the customer's loyalty over the long haul.

So how can you put your clients' concerns to bed? "You have to understand the buyer's perception of risk, and decide whether you think those views are valid or not," says Michael W. McLaughlin, founder of the consultancy Mindshare Consulting and author of *Winning the Professional Services Sale*. "Then, create a communication approach that provides compelling evidence for how you will address each specific area of concern. To overcome the buyer's reluctance, you need to prove that you know how to handle what they think are the deal-breaker risks of a project."

For Matt Gledhill, that starts with anticipating ahead of time what the client's concerns will be and then scrupulously addressing them through consultative selling. To pull this off, the marketing consultant from San Antonio-based Walker Advertising (*asi/354440*) immerses himself in understanding a customer and his or her particular objectives for each promotional campaign. Gledhill tailors solutions that will work and communicates clearly how and why they will produce the desired ROI. "If you've done your job right," he says, "it will be clear to

Be candid about your views on the potential risks your buyer faces and, chances are, your buyer will reciprocate.

MICHAEL W. McLAUGHLIN, MINDSHARE CONSULTING

the client that they are going to get return on their investment."

Like Gledhill, Jean Moore, owner of Fayetteville, NC-based Moore Exposure (*asi/276255*), says thoroughly understanding customers, their goals, and their potential insecurities about a project is critical. Knowing those makes it easier to make clients comfortable with proceeding on a promotional campaign.

On a recent project, a large client wanted a particular name-brand accessory to give as a gift to executive-level clients. Unfortunately, the sports industry company didn't have the budget for the product it desired. Moore did research and identified a similar name-brand accessory at a cost-effective price that she was confident would create the impression with end-users that the customer was after. Knowing the client may have hesitations because its first-choice product wasn't feasible, Moore prepared and then elucidated reasons for why the alternative product was a viable, ROI-generating solution. In so doing, she set the buyers at ease and paved the way for a result that was lucrative for her and beneficial for the sports company.

Your actions will be specific to the customer's situation, but there's a common thread to allaying concerns: be honest. "Be candid about your views on the potential risks your buyer faces and, chances are, your buyer will reciprocate," says McLaughlin. Even if a

truthful assessment complicates a certain deal, it will help establish you as an honest, reliable partner – someone the client can trust and thus someone who they'll turn to again. "Honesty and transparency will generally develop a stronger relationship," says Kevin Scharnek, founder of 14 West (*asi/197092*), "and for the people who don't appreciate that, chances are loyalty would be a challenge with them going forward anyway."

Christopher Ruvo is a staff writer for Wearables.

CALMING PRESENCE

It's a fact: Clients are going to have concerns about a project at one time or another. Here is a blueprint for effectively addressing those concerns:

- Understand the buyer and his or her business
- Grasp the client's goals for a particular project
- Anticipate the concerns of the buyer and the company
- Develop solutions that will produce the ROI he or she is after
- Be thoroughly prepared to address the client's concerns and explain how the apparel/other products you're proposing will work for buyers when and how they expect them to.

WEARABLES UNIVERSITY

The source for your wearables education

By Tonia Cook Kimbrough

Courses this month:

Fabric Tutorial – 406

Decorating Workshop – 124

Need To Know Terms – 229

Color Clinic – 346

Performance Primer – 292

A top-level look at the functionality of double-knit fabric.

Fabric Tutorial – 406

Senior

Double Knit On Duty

Need a garment to provide function and durability for active lifestyles, workwear or sports? Look to a double knit. Because these fabrics are “double-layered,” they’re thicker than a single knit. Two sets of needles are used in the knitting process to interlock yarns. The result is a medium-weight to heavyweight fabric that looks the same on both sides. It has less stretch than a single knit, yet still provides resiliency.

“What double knits allow Ash City (*asi/37143*) to achieve aside from performance benefits is versatility through the product line,” says Elson Yeung, product line manager/designer for the supplier. Yeung highlights the company’s men’s and ladies’ EDry color-block polos, which have both cotton and polyester. “The double-knit structure puts the comfortable cotton layer close to the skin while the top layer adds moisture-wicking performance,” Yeung says. “This gives us the best of both worlds with comfort and performance in one garment.”

Uniforms in both the workwear and athletic wear arenas are



DOUBLE-KNIT HALLMARKS

1. Medium to heavy weight
2. Fine rib
3. Doesn't curl at the edge
4. Durable
5. Comfortable

*This double-knit softball jersey (1279) from Teamwork Athletic Apparel (*asi/90673*; circle 132 on Free Info Card) wicks moisture and offers four-way stretch for top athletic performance.*

*photo courtesy of Teamwork Athletic Apparel (*asi/90673*)*

Double Knit:

“When compared to a warp-knit polyester, a double-knit fabric can provide excellent four-way stretch. A baseball pant, for instance, will flex both around the leg and down the length of it.”

*Andy Lehrer, Teamwork Athletic Apparel (*asi/90673*)*

frequently fabricated from double knits, particularly polyester and poly-blends. “Double-knit polyester applications in the sports market are especially strong in areas where durability and flexibility are of paramount importance,” says Andy Lehrer, president of Teamwork Athletic Apparel (*asi/90673*). “When compared to a warp-knit polyester, a double-knit fabric can provide excellent four-way stretch. A baseball pant, for instance, will flex both around the leg and down the length of it. When a player slides, the double-knit fabric has better give, which makes for a more durable, more comfortable and better-performing product.”



*These polos from Ash City (*asi/37143*; circle 131 on Free Info Card) offer double-knit construction. The ladies' EDry color-block polo (left, 75065) is made from a 60/40 cotton/poly blend. The Serac ladies' zippered polo (right, 78657) is made of 75% polyester/25% nylon double-knit jacquard.*

*photos courtesy of Ash City (*asi/37143*)*

An entry-level course to inspire economical yet customized stock art solutions.

Decorating Workshop – 124 *Freshman*

Creating Customized Designs From Stock Art

Clients don't always come to you with artwork ready for apparel application. In fact, many small businesses or nonprofit organizations might not even have a logo for a promotion. Designing one from scratch takes time and drives up costs.

That's when customizing stock art becomes a great advantage. Stock art can be purchased as individual images, in collections (grouped by themes such as sports, mascots, military or occupations) and as entire libraries. A single stock art image can cost as little as a few dollars, and then be customized in less than an hour.

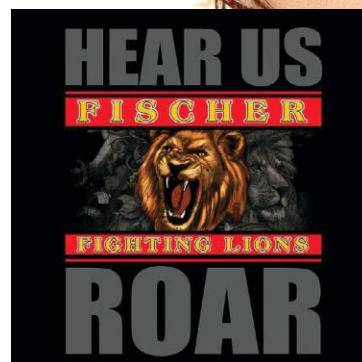
Dane Clement, founder of Great Dane Graphics, suggests sourcing stock art from a provider that understands the ad specialty business. For example, you'll want images that are royalty-free with no limitations on how many times they can be used or on the type of product on which they'll be imprinted. Ideally, once you purchase the stock art image, you can use it to decorate a T-shirt, cap, mug — or whatever

A single stock art image can cost as little as a few dollars, and then be customized in less than an hour.

promotional item is required for a program. "Make sure to read the licensing agreement," Clement recommends. Some generic stock art sources don't allow printing on goods to be sold.

You'll also want full-color stock art that is easily manipulated with graphic design software such as Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator or CorelDraw. The Great Dane collection of stock art comes as high-resolution, layered Photoshop files with two layers: artwork and background. This easily allows you to add your own type, logos, etc., and can be used for embroidery digitizing, dye-sublimation transfers, digital transfers (inkjet and color laser), digital direct-to-garment printing or screen printing.

Whether you choose stock art that's stylized or photographic, you can manipulate it to look very different. Clement suggests playing with the graphic by adding or eliminating portions. For example, you can encapsulate an image within lettering or use just part of the design. You can alter the look of full-color artwork by making it monochromatic or distressed or adding embellishment such as foil or rhinestones.



You can create several looks from a single stock art image. Here, Dane Clement, founder of Great Dane Graphics (circle 133 on Free Info Card), has taken the original Fashion Lion stock art and transformed it into a variety of school mascot logos.
photo courtesy of Great Dane Graphics

LEARN IT LIVE!

Get hands-on decorating experience by attending "Add A Heat-Printing Operation To Your Business Today" at **The ASI Show** Dallas (Wednesday, February 6, 1:15 p.m.). This in-depth, half-day workshop will teach you how to print everything from shirts to caps to bags and more.

Intermediate-level descriptions of embroidery backings.

Need-To-Know Terms – 229 *Sophomore*

Embroidery Backings Defined

A basic understanding of embroidery backings is useful, whether you're an embroiderer or employing one to embellish your clients' apparel. A backing is a woven or nonwoven material used underneath the item or fabric being embroidered to provide support and stability.

Here's a cheat sheet of five basic types to know:

- 1. Tearaway backing** is a popular choice because any excess can be torn away from the garment after embroidery, eliminating delicate cutwork with scissors. Use it for sturdier fabrics and wovens. Because tearaway backings are made up of weaker fibers (making them easy to tear), they usually do not launder as well over the long term as cutaway backings.
- 2. Cutaway backing** is made of stronger fibers and adds more stability to lightweight or stretchy fabrics, such as a knit. After a design is embroidered, the excess backing is cut away from the embellishment. Best used when the backside of embroidery will not be seen.
- 3. Adhesive backings** are important for hoopless embroidery, adhering to fabric thanks to a pressure-sensitive coating. These backings peel and stick to fabric, and then can be torn away after embroidering. Some are fusible, meaning that they apply with heat.
- 4. Water-soluble backings** (and toppings) are ideal for textured or napped fabrics into which you do not want stitches to sink. As the name suggests, these can be washed away or dissolved after the design is embroidered.
- 5. Poly-mesh backing** keeps a design looking neat on sheer, thin or light-colored fabrics, considered a "no-show" stabilizer. Another advantage: it's soft.

Various types of E-Zee backings are available from Madira (circle 138 on Free Info Card).



Photos courtesy of Madira



Advanced insights to avoid – or optimize – a color clash.

Color Clinic – 346

Junior

Clash Course In Color Pairing

The artist Edvard Munch once said, “Some colors reconcile themselves to one another; others just clash.” That’s the challenge every designer faces: finding colors that work well in combination. But how do you determine what works?

There’s a common rule of thumb: Colors that appear together in nature coexist harmoniously in design. Think of the brown, blue and green along a lakeside path, or the beige and turquoise of the sand and sea. Even surprising combinations can inspire, like a red poppy in a field of green – two colors that might be considered unlikely mates.

As color complements (sitting across from one another on the color wheel), they create a so-called “clash,” generating the most visual tension. Ignore the negative wording; pairing complements can be very successful. Turquoise, for example, looks fashion-forward when paired with a coral for a punchy palette. Gold next to navy lends a regal power. The key is in selecting the right saturation of color and using the right amounts. A touch of red in a field of green pleasingly pops, whereas the two colors used in equal doses may well clash.

There’s more to consider. The website Fuel Your Creativity (fuelyourcreativity.com) defines clashing color schemes as “one color paired with a second color to the left or right of its color wheel complement.” Similarly, split complementary color schemes (which take the two colors on either side of a color’s complement) are difficult to pull off. The best result that creates harmony is to allow one of the three colors to take center stage and use the other two hues sparingly.



The green, purple and orange (a triadic color harmony) of this Bird of Paradise flower shows that “jarring” colors can work well together.

The Safe Bet? You might think that picking colors right next to each other on the color wheel is always a safe bet. It usually is, but sometimes “too close but not close enough” doesn’t work. Mixing blues that feature greenish or violet hues might appear off. It’s better

STUCK FOR A COLOR SCHEME?

Try the **free** ColorSchemer Touch app for your iPhone. You can browse over one million pre-made color schemes or search for a colorway by keyword such as “spring” or “ocean.” You can even take photos of objects or landscapes with colors that inspire you; the app pulls hues from that image to create a scheme.



to take a single blue-violet or blue-green and then select from a range of tints and tones to create interest and contrast (think of looking at a variety of paint swatches that all stem from a single specific color). By doing so, you’ll create a monochromatic color scheme that works well.

An intermediate review of odor-management apparel options.

Performance Primer – 292 *Sophomore*

Win The Battle Against Odor

While moisture-management fabrics work to keep a person comfortable and smelling fresh by wicking away perspiration from the body, there is another technology available to improve odor management. “The addition of an antimicrobial fabric shield offers the wearer added protection,” says Taraynn Lloyd, director of marketing at Edwards Garment (*asi/51752*), which offers an antimicrobial fabric shield on all of its Hi-Performance Dry-Mesh polos. “The antimicrobial finish is a treatment that blocks odor-causing bacterial growth and ensures freshness wash after wash. This fabric shield reduces bacterial contamination and acts as a natural deodorant.”

Lloyd suggests targeting amusement parks, museums, groundskeepers, zoos, hotel properties and restaurants for a combination of moisture management and antimicrobial-treated garments. “This is very important for those employees who work in a warm environment,” she says. “The antimicrobial fabric shield allows the garment to stay fresh, even when you may not be.” Any company in the recreational or resort market with front-line personnel greeting guests or assisting customers wants the overall impression to be positive.

Look for treatments that last the life of the garment. Carolina Made (*asi/43993*), for example, offers an antimicrobial treatment in its Willow Pointe Performance Baby Pique sport shirt that is engineered at the yarn stage. Spokesperson Lori Helms explains this application prohibits the growth of odor-causing bacteria within the fiber, keeping the shirt fresh and odor-free for the long term.

Expert Performance T (*asi/53404*) engineers athletic apparel styles enhanced with a topical finish called Body Freshé, applied to fabric at the time of padding. Adam Heimann,



The antimicrobial fabric shield of this performance long-sleeve polo (1578) from Edwards Garment (*asi/51752*; circle 134 on Free Info Card) prevents odor and ensures freshness on the job.

photo courtesy of Edwards Garment (*asi/51752*)

Odor management matters at play, too. Look for performance sportswear like these Willow Pointe baby piqué performance polos for men (2000) and ladies (2001), which are enhanced with an antimicrobial treatment applied to fibers at the yarn stage. Available from Carolina Made (*asi/43993*; circle 135 on Free Info Card)

photo courtesy of Carolina Made (*asi/43993*)



marketing director for Expert Performance T, recommends the garments for use in athletic and uniform programs. “Body Freshé works well with our permanent moisture-wicking technology,” he says. “It couples with ventilation that takes place by having the air come in through the fabric as the moisture leaves,

which results in faster drying.” The technology performs best if no fabric softeners are used in the laundering process.

Talk with your supplier about garments with odor-management technology to choose the best solution for your clients’ audience and environment.

SalesBUZZ

The best selling strategies for wearables salespeople

COMPILED BY JENNIFER VISHNEVSKY

SALES TIP OF THE MONTH

Make more small promises. If you are about to leave a meeting with a prospective customer and you intend to follow up with him with a phone call in a few days, don't let those plans be a surprise to the prospect. No promise is too small for this to work.

Go the Parade Route



Wowing crowds for 123 years and counting, the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, CA, is one of the most prestigious parades in the world. With thousands of participants marching in bands, riding floats and performing choreographed routines, viewers can't help but admire the amount of planning and dedication required to pull off a show this grand. All participants are there to have fun and perform their best, especially if they are members of the high school marching band chosen to represent their peers.

Webb City High School in Webb City, MO, was selected to attend the Rose Parade for a second time, a huge honor for the Cardinal Pride marching band and its 140 members. Since the students would need to appear unified and sophisticated, the school sought out local distributor Mid-America Media (*asi/269810*) to find a jacket for the members to wear.

"We worked with the band director to find a jacket that would keep the students warm enough throughout the trip to the Rose Bowl and for the whole winter," says Mike Moore, owner of Mid-America Media. "With the state of the economy and the travel expenses for the students going on the trip, budget was definitely a concern."

Originally, school officials thought they would have to stick with a lighter jacket due to cost limitations, but Moore was able to find heavier jackets from Tri-Mountain (*asi/92125*), a supplier familiar with the education market due to its hefty line of school and sport gear. "We chose a cotton-lined, full-zip Bay Watch jacket, its youth companion style, and the windproof and waterproof Conqueror jacket for the band members, the parents and staff," says Moore. "They fit the budget and the quality was great."

Webb City High School students and staff were determined to stand out at the parade and uphold the event's motto for the year: A Cut Above the Rest. They chose red jackets to fit the school's colors, and decoration was placed on the back and both chests of the jackets. "Tri-Mountain did elaborate embroidery in-house that featured a large and detailed Rose Parade logo on the back, and band member names and instruments on the front," says Glenn Oyoung, former chief operating officer at Tri-Mountain. "There were 200 jackets total, and the end-users were very happy with the results."

— Andraya Vantrease

Family Ties



Distributors can pick up some surprising leads through the projects or groups their family members are involved in. A volunteer organization that a spouse joined, or a child's school club, are often in need of promotional products or may just present an opportunity to meet other professionals who might be able to use your services.

Dale Schumacher, senior account executive at Control Seneca (*asi/167767*), is a member of the booster club for the drama group at his twin daughters' school. Though it has only seven members, Schumacher has gotten two accounts just through working alongside the other parents as they try to help raise funds for productions at the school.

"Mostly they come to me now, saying, 'I hear you're in the promotional products industry,'" he says. One of his big clients is the school itself, which had been paying \$20 per shirt to its distributor. Schumacher could get it for them for just \$14.50 apiece. "Then they said, 'I see you do T-shirts – can you also do lanyards? Mousepads?' and I said 'yup, yup,'" Schumacher says.

Whether it's little league sports, scouts, or some other activity, distributors can find that getting more involved in their kids' programs can have business benefits on top of the personal ones.

— Alex Palmer

LEARN IT LIVE!

Six-figure sales are within reach by attending "How to Sell \$100,000 in 30 Days" at **The ASI Show** Dallas (Thursday, February 7, 11:00 a.m.). You'll learn how to contact, pitch and sell to large-order buyers and make margins above 45%.

Ask Questions, And Answer the Right Question

In today's markets, the most valuable commodity is the ability to connect with others and rapidly build trust. And that begins by asking the right questions. Asking questions and letting people come up with their own answers is far more effective than spouting facts or trying to talk someone into something. Telling creates resistance. Asking creates relationships.

Good questions save you from making a fool of yourself. Before responding to a request or answering someone's question to you, it's often wise to get more information about what the other person really wants. When a prospect asks, "Can you tell me about your firm?" most people go on and on about their company, but the client is usually interested in one particular aspect of your business, not how many offices you have in Europe. Ever seen someone answer the wrong question? It's painful to watch. Asking a clarifying question can save you huge embarrassment.

A potential client asked me for the names of three references. I asked, "What particular information are you seeking? Any references I give you are only going to rave about me." It turned out the prospect had no interest in actual references. What she really wanted to know was how other clients had tackled the organizational resistance she was expecting. This question – and the subsequent conversation – turned a small lead for a keynote speech into a major, year-long project.

– Andrew Sobel

A Buyer's "Tell"

Just like in poker, you can read your buyers. They have "tells." Their mannerisms and facial expressions reveal how your proposal is being received.

Sales trainer and author John Boe explains key cues. A tilted head is positive. If the prospect's body remains relaxed and he leans forward, you're on the right track. A genuine smile, of course, is also good. Watch out for negative gestures that indicate displeasure or uncertainty. These include scratching the nose, putting a finger to the mouth, rubbing the temples or placing a thumb under the chin. If your prospect does any of these for more than a moment, pause. Ask for feedback.

– Tonia Cook Kimbrough

Boost Your Word-of-Mouth Marketing



It all comes down to this: People want honest opinions before they buy and will trust those people who come recommended. The biggest influencer of buying decisions is, therefore, word-of-mouth, both in physical and digital form. According to the Word of Mouth Marketing Association, multiple factors can influence a person's buying decisions. More than half (54%) of people make buying decisions based on word-of-mouth marketing. From there, 47% consult information from a website, 42% rely on e-mail from a friend and 31% consider online reviews.

For advertising purposes, word-of-mouth marketing is the Holy Grail, because you don't have to pay a thing. Your satisfied clients will feel compelled to tell their friends all about your business because you're so fabulous.

One of Mary Glagola's goals is to continue to give back to the community in whatever ways she can. The partner of Annie's Uniforms

& Corporate Apparel has sponsored events, which have helped with brand recognition. Her company has also donated T-shirts, pens and other products for events. "This has in turn shown members of the community that we are not always in this business to make money for ourselves, but rather, we understand the mission and economic impact numerous nonprofits are having in our area," she says.

Event staffers have verbally thanked her company in front of attendees for its generous help. "People take notice and choose to support us rather than another company in the area that chooses not to give back," says Glagola. When previous clients spread the buzz about her great personalized customer service and community involvement, sure enough, she secured a new client and has continued the relationship for over a year now.

– Jennifer Vishnevsky

Hot Product Showcase

This Month: Headwear

By Chuck Zak

Formal headwear is like disco – folks remember with varying degrees of fondness when each was ubiquitous, but at some point the music had to stop. While disco has morphed into countless shades of electronica, headwear has evolved from a formal necessity to a favored accessory, one with unlimited potential to complement any outfit or brand. This month's collection provides ample evidence of the range and appeal our industry has to offer when it comes to headwear. Cap off an apparel promotion by suggesting one of these versatile items, with branding options subtle enough for the symphony or sassy enough for Funky Town.



Perth Mark

This functional favorite earns its exalted status with a devil-may-care attitude that's impossible to fake. This brushed twill Aussie hat (7805A) features the style's telltale side snaps and chin cord and adds a hint of exotic adventure for zoo staff or museum gift shops. Available from Mega Cap (*asi/70434*; circle 118 on Free Info Card).



Kickin' Back

The soft jersey fabric on this six-panel mid-profile cap (6778T) combined with its Spandex-enabled elasticity give it an unbeatably comfortable fit. Great for any client looking to project a relaxed, casual image like vacation getaways or leisure-themed media. Available from Flexfit (circle 139 on Free Info Card).

Beautiful Beret

Consider the titular raspberry beret that got Prince all moony back in '85. Does your client embody the unassailable style of that storied cap? If so, this 100% wool beret (BERE-4139-004) with leather edging might be a uniquely chic way to express it. It's a nice gift for that special fashionista, and a natural tie-in with anything even remotely French-themed. Available from Wolfmark (*asi/98085*; circle 92 on Free Info Card).



Ranch Dressing

Go west, young man – or just look like you did. This wool felt western hat (9972) with shapeable brim is fully American-made in both its construction and its inspiration. Private-label this hombre and gift your favorite wannabe-cowboy or promote any Texas-sized client. Available from Philadelphia Rapid Transit (*asi/77945*; circle 119 on Free Info Card).

• The snazziest wearables around



Soldier On

This high-profile, unstructured cotton twill military cap (6501) with hook and loop closure is tailor-made for big, bold embroidery. A great topper for auto repair chains, parts suppliers or even car wash teams. Available from Quake City Caps ([asi/80129](#); circle 120 on Free Info Card).



Dye To Know

The fun colors on this dip-dye knit cotton beanie (I-K450) help melt the gray of winter into warm reds, greens and even begonia for Pete's sake. It makes a nice spirit-builder for schools or cool-weather charity events. Available from Paramount Apparel ([asi/75945](#); circle 121 on Free Info Card).

Cooler Heads

Imprinting options are legion on this heavy-weight acrylic helmet-tuque (FP562-05/09) with interior microfleece lining. Go low-key on the ear flap or knit the logo right up front (in one of the many available decoration methods) for high-profile promotion of winter destinations or snowmobile dealers. Available from Fersten Worldwide Inc. ([asi/53974](#); circle 101 on Free Info Card).



Well Worn

Camouflage accents peek through the frayed chino cotton on this unconstructed cap (7170) with pre-curved bill. Perfect for any client with a rough-hewn customer base: gun dealers, cycle shops or heavy equipment manufacturers. Available from KC Caps ([asi/58760](#); circle 122 on Free Info Card).

UV Or Not UV?

Effective sun protection doesn't get much more adorable than this playful women's hat (13100063) made with Pro Tek fabric to block over 97% of nasty UV rays. Tons of colors and not a dull one in the bunch. Great for promoting spas or summer getaway spots. Available from UV Promo ([asi/41988](#); circle 124 on Free Info Card).



On Top

This intriguing bomber hat (92214PE) not only warms ears with the comfort of premium polar fleece, but it does so with a look that is not quite like any other bomber. Definite youth potential here; try hip retailers of audio equipment or DJ events at urban nightspots. Available from Lakeside Mills Inc. ([asi/66105](#); circle 123 on Free Info Card).



Mack Daddy

Playa-hatin' fools best step off when this paper braided fedora (Q7243-5) puts in an appearance. If your client projects an appropriately confident and fearlessly dandified aura, or favors a Miami or Cuban theme, this is worth a long, admiring look. Available from Q Sportswear ([asi/80100](#); circle 125 on Free Info Card).

Chuck Zak is a staff writer for Wearables.

6TH ANNUAL Wearables

APPAREL DESIGN AWARDS

The leading products in the industry get recognized once again in our lofty awards program.

BY C.J. MITTICA AND SARA LAVENDUSKI

▼ Best Accessory



WINNER
Wearables Apparel
Design Awards

WINNER: London Olympics Bracelets

SUPPLIER: Diane Katzman Design (*asi/63988*)

Circle 141 on Free Info Card

Last year, Staples Promotional Products (*asi/120601*) commissioned Diane Katzman Design to create bracelets for commemorating the 2012 London Olympics and promoting NBCUniversal's sponsorship of the Games. "The set needed to be fashionable, memorable and at a price point that allowed for margins when sold on the Web," says President Diane Katzman. "Each charm was custom-cast and hand-strung as a five-bracelet set complete with a Diane Katzman artist card." Diane Katzman Design licensed the London icons on the bracelets, from Big Ben to the Queen's Crest, and then added their own Spot of Tea and Bobby Hat charms. "Promotional accessories must be beautiful," says Katzman, "if they're to stand the test of time."

◀ HIDDEN FACT

"After Kathie Lee Gifford and Hoda Kotb wore our pieces on *The Today Show*," says Katzman, "they sold out immediately on the NBCUniversal website. We had to rush into production for more custom-cast pieces."

► Best Outerwear

WINNER: Ladies' Arboretum Full-Zip Fleece (LCK02460)

SUPPLIER: Cutter & Buck (*asi/47965*)

Circle 150 on Free Info Card

"A great overknit needs to be versatile," says Ty Cannon, national account associate at Cutter & Buck (*asi/47965*) about the Ladies' Arboretum Full-Zip Fleece (LCK02460). "It should be worn comfortably into the office, out to a lunch meeting, to the gym and even at a social function after work. We've brought a focus to providing lifestyle products that can be worn throughout the course of the day. This piece is an excellent example of those efforts."

The Arboretum fleece is made of soft polar fleece fabric for warmth and performance, while the hybrid woven panels of gathered micro denier nylon create an on-trend feminine look. "This great lifestyle product will provide maximum exposure to a brand," says Cannon.



◀ 1ST RUNNER-UP

Stability Jacket (229158)

SUPPLIER:

Holloway Sportswear

(*asi/61430*)

Circle 144 on Free Info Card



◀ 2ND RUNNER-UP

Women's Thermal UV Softshell Jacket (FW3335)

SUPPLIER: Fersten Worldwide Inc. (*asi/53974*)

Circle 101 on Free Info Card



1ST RUNNER-UP ▲

OGIO Endurance 9.0 Duffel (412025)

Supplier: SanMar (*asi/84863*)

Circle 98 on Free Info Card

2ND RUNNER-UP ►

SafeRides Glasses

Supplier: College Glasses

(*asi/45657*)

Circle 98 on Free Info Card



How the Winners Were Chosen

In August, *Wearables* first asked for apparel and accessory submissions from suppliers, decorators and distributors. Finalists were selected by the *Wearables* editorial team, judging the products on design appeal, wearability, performance attributes and look. Using the same criteria, our readers then voted on the finalists to determine the winner in each category. A total of 6,157 votes were cast.

▼ Best Ladies Knit Top



WINNER
Wearables Apparel
Design Awards

WINNER: Juniors' Off-the-Shoulder Crew Neck Sweater Fleece (PRM2400)

SUPPLIER: Independent Trading Co.
Circle 149 on Free Info Card

"The sweater fleece fabric makes this piece unique," says salesman Jeff Bush. "It gives it a vintage look and feel. We use long staple dyed yarns and we leave the inside unbrushed so it has a sweater-like feel." Bush says the sweater would look great either printed or embroidered, or even blank. "It has a relevant cut and fit," he explains, "and the sweater fleece fabric gives a unique texture and feel."



◀ **1ST RUNNER-UP**

Corazon Recycled Vest (98595)

SUPPLIER:

Trimark Sportswear (asi/92122)
Circle 107 on Free Info Card

2ND RUNNER-UP ▶

Gabrielle Rohde Royce Ladies' Knit Cardigan (G330) with embellishment

SUPPLIER: Sportco (asi/88792)
Circle 148 on Free Info Card



▼ Best T-Shirt Decoration



WINNER
Wearables Apparel
Design Awards

WINNER: Foil Accented Tank

SUPPLIER: In Your Face Apparel (asi/62494)
Circle 151 on Free Info Card

This custom cut-and-sewn garment is printed over the seams and features a custom private label. "The patterns were custom created specific to the job," says Nick Davis, senior sales representative. "The print was produced on the unfinished materials before it was sewn together and the private labeling was done on a standard label press." Davis says the item is ideal for a retail environment because of the bright colors and eye-popping design, which is perfect for branding. "To pitch it, I would focus in on its 'out of the box' feel," he explains, "from the custom cut and sew to the added branding that the private label provides. It's extremely trendy and could be sold for a substantial dollar amount."

1ST RUNNER-UP ▶

Discharge Groove T-shirt (229300)

SUPPLIER: Holloway Sportswear (asi/61430)
Circle 144 on Free Info Card



◀ **2ND RUNNER-UP**

Skull T-shirt

SUPPLIER: Target Decorated Apparel (asi/90549)

Circle 140 on Free Info Card

► Best Hoodie/Sweatshirt/Fleece

WINNER: Zuma Striped Hoodie (F678)

SUPPLIER: Tri-Mountain (*asi/92125*)

Circle 96 on Free Info Card

This new easy-care hoodie is made of soft 60/40 cotton/polyester and includes a drawstring hood, kangaroo pocket and a warm fleece-lined interior. "The striped pattern and heathered colors are very popular right now," says Joy Shi, marketing associate. "Everyone from gadget and tech guys to surfers and skaters are attracted to this modern and laid-back styling." Shi adds that the item's versatility is a great selling point. "It's the answer to those searching for that perfect casual sweatshirt for hitting the gym after work, strolling outdoors or wearing after a long day at the beach."

WINNER
Wearables Apparel
Design Awards



1ST RUNNER-UP ▼

Coverstitched Hoodie (SA113)

SUPPLIER: Sportco (*asi/88792*)

Circle 148 on Free Info Card



◀ 2ND RUNNER-UP

Tri-Blend Fleece Hoodie (TRT497)

SUPPLIER: American Apparel

(*asi/35297*)

Circle 110 on Free Info Card



WINNER
Wearables Apparel
Design Awards

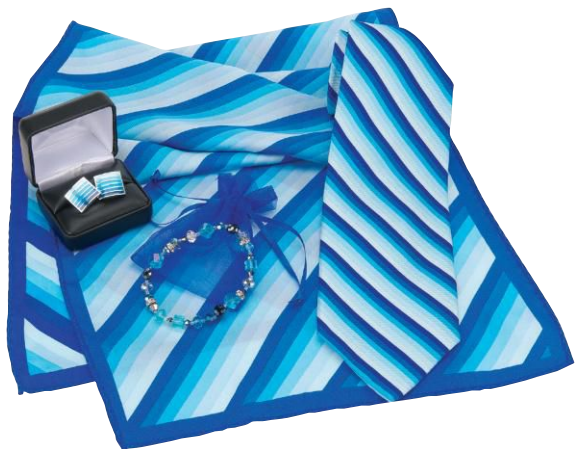
Best Use of Color

WINNER: Electrify Shirt (222372)

SUPPLIER: Holloway Sportswear
(asi/61430)

Circle 144 on Free Info Card

The Electrify shirt is made of a lightweight technical fabric that features a smooth polyester surface and high mechanical stretch. "This item is unique," says marketing manager Jennifer Nixon, "because we were able to achieve a rich palette of colors in heathered shades." Designer/merchandiser Stephanie DePaula says the shirt is ideal as a team, training or casual piece and looks great with laser etching and all-over screen printing. "Achieve the look of a cotton heathered tee with moisture-management properties," she adds. "The soft hand and multiple color ways provide a great option for multiple applications."



1ST RUNNER-UP ▲
BBVA COMPASS SET

SUPPLIER: Diane Katzman Design (asi/63988)

Circle 141 on Free Info Card



2ND RUNNER-UP ▲
TIMES SQUARE T-SHIRT

DECORATOR: Culture Studio
(asi/700559)

Circle 145 on Free Info Card

WINNERWearables Apparel
Design Awards

Best Polo

WINNER: Men's DryTec Sullivan Embossed Polo (MCK00665)

SUPPLIER: Cutter & Buck (asi/47965)
Circle 150 on Free Info Card

The DryTec Sullivan Embossed Polo (MCK00665) is perfect as a uniform item, corporate garment or golf shirt. "The embossed design, which creates a subtle pattern effect on the front, is achieved on polyester fabrics through a process that involves heat and pressure," says Ty Cannon, national account associate. "The poly yarns are melted, thus creating this permanent and very tonal pattern effect. It's a classy looking polo with the modern style and fabric requirements of today's marketplace. It doesn't fit just one demographic; it looks great on everybody!"



▲ 1ST RUNNER-UP

Lightning Polo (K119)

SUPPLIER: Tri-Mountain
(asi/92125)

Circle 96 on Free Info Card



◀ 2ND RUNNER-UP

Port Authority Performance Cross Dye Polo (K513)

SUPPLIER: SanMar
(asi/84863)

Circle 98 on Free Info Card

**WINNER**Wearables Apparel
Design Awards

Best Woven/Blouse

WINNER: Ladies' Long Sleeve Blakely Hybrid Woven (LCW04131)

SUPPLIER: Cutter & Buck (asi/47965)
Circle 150 on Free Info Card

The Ladies' Blakely Hybrid Woven (LCW04131) is made of a yarn-dyed oxford fabric and features 2x2 rib knit side panels. "These unique, stretchy side panels are a great feature," says Ty Cannon, national account associate. "They provide easy wear that fits many body types." While this woven is perfect as a tradeshow or staff uniform piece, it's also a fashionable top that features feminine attributes, including rolled sleeves and front pockets. Says Cannon: "The Ladies' Blakely offers flattering lines for effortless style."



▲ 1ST RUNNER-UP

Red House Slim Fit Non-Iron Pinpoint Oxford (RH62)

SUPPLIER: SanMar (asi/84863)
Circle 98 on Free Info Card

2ND RUNNER-UP ▶

Camille Matte Satin Long Sleeve Woven (LB734)

SUPPLIER: Tri-Mountain
(asi/92125)
Circle 96 on Free Info Card





Best Eco Product

WINNER: ECO Berlin Sublimated Tee

SUPPLIER: Vapor Apparel (asi/93396)
Circle 146 on Free Info Card

This sublimated tee is made of 100% recycled post-industrial/post-consumer material, about 12 water bottles' worth of recycled plastic. The yarn was made by Unifi Corporation, and the airjet-spun polyester was made exclusively in Bogota, Colombia, and then digitally sublimated at the LEED-Certified Vapor Apparel facility in Charleston, SC. "It's ready for any occasion," says chief revenue officer and Vapor co-founder Chris Bernat. "It's also ideal for helping corporate customers increase their sustainability position. We've had some large customers outfit their service techs and other field personnel in this gear." Bernat says to pitch this item, focus on the full-color printing, 12-piece short runs and sustainability.



▲ 1ST RUNNER-UP

Razor USA Zip Hoodie

DECORATOR:
Leaderpromos
(asi/287087)

SUPPLIER: Alternative
Apparel (asi/34850)
Circle 147 on Free
Info Card



▲ 2ND RUNNER-UP

Ladies' Organic Cotton Long-Sleeve Crew

SUPPLIER: Ash City (asi/37143)
Circle 131 on Free Info Card

Best Trendy Hat



WINNER
Wearables Apparel
Design Awards

WINNER: Reversible Perform Beanie (223833)

SUPPLIER: Holloway Sportswear (asi/61430)
Circle 144 on Free Info Card

The Reversible Perform Beanie is made of lightweight technical fabrics, which is often a limited option in the performance headwear market, says marketing manager Jennifer Nixon. "It can be used as a daily headwear piece or for more active recreation," she adds. "It offers three-season protection because of its lightweight technical fabrics." Stephanie DePaula, designer/merchandiser, says the reversibility is a great pitching point. "It's two hats for one," she says. "It gives the client options for multiple branding techniques, and the logo can be put on both sides."

1ST RUNNER-UP ▶

District Herringbone Fedora (DT622)

SUPPLIER: SanMar (asi/84863)
Circle 98 on Free Info Card



▲ 2ND RUNNER-UP

Belvedere Hat,
Scarf and Mittens

SUPPLIER: Bishop the
Garment Co. (asi/40585)
Circle 142 on Free Info Card



WINNER
Wearables Apparel
Design Awards

Best Apparel Innovation

WINNER: Flex Fleece Dog Hoodie (F997)

SUPPLIER: American Apparel (asi/35297)

Circle 110 on Free Info Card

The Flex Fleece Dog Hoodie (F997) was modeled after American Apparel's popular Unisex Flex Fleece Hoodie (F497) and is perfect for indoor or outdoor use. "The fabric is very breathable and comforting to dogs," says category developer Amy Talebizadeh. "The zipper really sets it apart from other dog hoodies since most are designed with Velcro." After the piece was designed, produced and made available for purchase, increasing numbers of people at the American Apparel factory brought their dogs to work wearing them. "Our Facebook page was filled up for weeks with images of dogs in hoodies," says Talebizadeh. "Dogs are family and must be protected from the cold and kept cozy and happy."

HIDDEN FACT

"The dog hoodie was first made for Manou and Hedkayce, CEO Dov Charney's Chihuahuas, to keep them warm while visiting the factory," says Talebizadeh. "Chihuahuas hate the cold!"

1ST RUNNER-UP ▼

Shawn Convertible Hoodie Jacket (J8150)

SUPPLIER: Tri-Mountain (asi/92125)

Circle 96 on Free Info Card



2ND RUNNER-UP ▼

Balkan Insulated Jacket (99522)

SUPPLIER: Trimark Sportswear (asi/92122)

Circle 107 on Free Info Card





◀ Best Performance/ Athletic Garment

WINNER: Dedication Jacket (229131)
and Traction Pant (229132)

SUPPLIER: Holloway
Sportswear (asi/61430)
Circle 144 on Free Info Card

The Dedication Jacket and Traction Pant are made of abrasion-resistant fabric, and both feature high mechanical stretch and wicking properties. “They’re breathable, and feature body mapped areas, tapered pant legs and a tri-color assortment that lends itself well to any brand or team,” says Stephanie DePaula, designer/merchandiser. Ideal end-users would be teams looking for travel items or warm-up uniforms. “They also work great for a fitness-inspired look for corporations promoting a healthy or active lifestyle,” says marketing manager Jennifer Nixon. “They feature a lightweight knit fabric, and they’re rich with performance attributes.”

◀ HIDDEN FACT

“Breathable inserts have been engineered into the product in strategic areas such as the back of the knee, the underarms and as an inseam gusset,” says DePaula.



1ST RUNNER-UP ▶

Sanibel Hoodie (23100080)

SUPPLIER: UV Promo
(asi/41988)
Circle 124 on Free Info Card



◀ 2ND RUNNER-UP

Jasper Hybrid Jacket (92960)

SUPPLIER: Trimark
Sportswear (asi/92122)
Circle 107 on Free Info Card

► Best Uniform Program

WINNER: Coors Light Uniform

SUPPLIER: In Your Face Apparel (asi/62494)
Circle 151 on Free Info Card

In Your Face Apparel created a full line of concepts for its beverage client's uniform. Each piece in the final program was domestically made of 95/5 cotton/spandex and is embellished with rhinestones for added pop on their imprint. "This is the perfect program for employee uniforms, retail websites and giveaways," says Brenda Zavala, senior sales representative.



▲ 1ST RUNNER-UP

Sport Uniform (229107, 222468, 222368, 222471, 222371)

SUPPLIER: Holloway Sportswear (asi/61430)
Circle 144 on Free Info Card



◀ 2ND RUNNER-UP

Men's Heel-Toe Polo (K908), Women's Double-Clutch Polo (KL908) and Pacer Jacket (7730)

SUPPLIER: Tri-Mountain (asi/92125)
Circle 96 on Free Info Card

C.J. Mittica is the editor and Sara Lavenduski is an editorial intern for Wearables.



Cause a ruckus with this rucksack (440Z) from Cross Canvas Company (asi/47541; circle 137 on Free Info Card). It features a front pocket, adjustable backpack straps and a handle loop.

BAGGAGE CLAIM

Promotional bags are popular and long-lasting, but the choices can be overwhelming. Here's how to drill down to what your client truly wants.

BY SARA LAVENDUSKI

There will be blood – and sweat, and tears, and a lot of mud. “You’ll Know At the Finish Line,” reads the official tagline of the Spartan Races, a series of punishing outdoor obstacle course competitions. Founded in 2004 by a group of race enthusiasts, the Spartan Races organization holds events throughout North America and now in such far-flung lands as India, Australia and Slovakia.

Known for grueling distances and challenging obstacles, the series includes everything from the three-mile Spartan Sprint to the Spartan Death Race, a 40-mile, 24-to-48-hour endurance and resilience test. With inspirations ranging from Navy SEAL training to gladiator battles of yore, it's serious business.

Even in this mud-soaked competition, a well-designed promotional bag can find a home. In one of last year's Spartan Races, Activate! Promotions + Marketing (*asi/141964*) designed and produced a dye-sublimated cinch backpack for Gaspari Nutrition. “We reproduced a full four-color process design on lightweight bags that some of the racers actually wore during the competition,” says Activate! account executive Michele Braddock. “They generated a lot of buzz, and in the end they became walking billboards that were useful to the users and affordable for our client.”

There are plenty of reasons to pitch an imprinted bag. According to the *Wearables Sales Forecast*, just under 90% of industry people feel their bag sales will grow or remain steady in 2013. Better yet, a single bag produces 5,732 impressions over its lifespan – topping all other promotional products in the United States. “It’s no secret that apparel products have extremely high impression rates,” says Tyler Fergusson, owner of Cut To The Chase Promotions (*asi/564954*). “However, a shirt may only get worn once a week, whereas a backpack or laptop bag can be carried around every day.”

So is it simply a matter of pitching a bag to all of your clients and raking in the profit? Not exactly. Choice is a paradox. With so many different types of bags available, it can be difficult to narrow down the options for a particular client. In addition, while the explosion of imprinted

reusable shopping bags has been lucrative, it's also made consumers wary; it's easy for many to claim “I don't need another bag.”

With those challenges in mind, here's how to pack up sales for the long haul.

Bag it up

While the tote bag has remained the most requested bag style in recent years, says Braddock, nonwovens and cinch backpacks (like the one used for Gaspari Nutrition) are steadily gaining traction among all client types. “Suppliers have changed the category dramatically by adding items that are affordable, eco-friendly and available in multiple colors and styles, and that can accept a variety of decorating techniques,” she explains. “Trade shows and event giveaways are the most common applications. We've also produced a variety of custom designs to

be used as a gift with purchase or to be sold in retail.” Jordy Gamson, president & CEO of The Icebox (*asi/229395*), has seen increasing sales of the cinch backpacks as well, because they’re appropriate for a variety of events. “We’ve sold them into clubs, sporting events, fun runs and trade shows,” he says.

In addition, traditional backpacks, gym bags, duffel bags and smaller utility bags continue to hold their own in the category. “They’re great as convention items and event giveaways, as well as for personal use,” says Kevin Shih, product manager at Preferred Nation (*asi/79384*), noting their adaptability. Utility bags in particular, like those used for documents and cosmetics, are great options for a variety of uses. “The zipper bag is very versatile,” says Carolyn Hollinger, vice president of sales at Bags by Troy Sunshade (*asi/92252*). “We recommend it for financial institutions, schools, travel agencies, dentists and car dealerships, among many others.”

On the more expensive side are leather bags as well as travel-friendly items that accommodate tech devices. “All of Leed’s (*asi/66887*) Compu bags that fit tablets and accessories are now made to be TSA-compliant,” says Mary Peplow, senior account executive at BrandAlliance (*asi/145177*). “Backpacks and messenger styles are popular now for the business traveler. Both tech bags and travel bags are perfect for sales forces and employee gifting.”

Leather bags in particular work well for membership gifts and employee incentives. This is especially the case when the recipient can choose a gift that includes desirable attributes like high-quality materials, comfort features and tech device accommodation. “Many companies decorate bags, backpacks, messengers and briefcases as gifts to their employees,” says Ashley Adams, marketing coordinator at S&S Activewear (*asi/84358*). “If that’s the case, your client will be interested in something of higher quality than that of a giveaway.”

But even the perfect bag needs the right imprint. For giveaways and other lower-cost items, Fergusson suggests silk-screening or a heat transfer – for higher-end bags, debossed leather or embroidered fabric. “Embroidery continues to be a prevalent and growing method,” says A.J. Dickson, category manager for Polyconcept North America,

the parent company of Leed’s and Bullet (*asi/42424*), “and it’s becoming more popular across styles and price points.” Peplow says the BrandAlliance team offers Photographixx and full-color transfer through Leed’s; both methods offer vivid color decoration at an affordable price.

Subtlety, however, doesn’t have to be *modus operandi* for all bags. Yes, Braddock has done engraved metal plates for higher-end bags, but “I’ve produced some very interesting dye-sublimated bags that were huge successes for my clients,” she says. Fortunately, decorating methods continue to become more adaptable, which gives clients many options for their promotional investment. Just be sure to consider placement carefully. Kevin Wilson,

“A shirt may only get worn once a week, whereas a backpack or laptop bag can be carried around every day.”

Tyler Fergusson, Cut To The Chase Promotions (*asi/564954*)

president and owner of AdVantages Advertising (*asi/109375*), suggests two-sided imprints because “there’s no guarantee the user will carry the bag with the imprint facing out.”

Making the Case

Durable, versatile, fit for just about everybody – it’s easy to make the case for bags as an effective promo item. “With bags, there are a lasting number of impressions available because of the visibility,” says Dickson. “You can use and reuse them for so many things.” Martin Lockhart, vice president of sales and marketing at Justin Case (*asi/63711*), says they’re appropriate stand-alone items because of “situational advantages” over other products, particularly apparel. “Bags are less likely to be rejected or disliked due to style, color or size. Most are unisex and designed to appeal to a generic audience,” he says.

Demographically, they span generations,

ethnicity and location. In one example, Lexus of Canada chose a carry-on bag in addition to other leather items from Ashlin BPG Marketing (*asi/37138*). The bags were co-branded and doled out as gifts. “Our totes and messengers will continue to be best-sellers since they’re age-independent, and all of our bags are back-to-basic designs, rather than too trendy,” says vice president of marketing Juaane E. Kochhar.

Versatility counts too. Supplier Ame & Lulu (*asi/35232*) specializes in totes, duffels, purses and golf accessories in distinctive prints; its bags feature high-quality materials and unique patterns. “Our overnight duffel can be used as a gym bag, and our beach bag doubles as an everyday tote,” says Amye Kurson, principal/designer. “This automatically expands the line within various markets immediately.”

So bags can be an intriguing sell. But how to find the right one? Hollinger recommends asking informational questions at the beginning to determine key details like size and the most appropriate fabric. “We help walk the distributor through the process to find the best bag for the purpose,” she says.

Lockhart says the more detailed the questions to the end-user, the better. “Ask, ‘What are your business goals and your client’s expectations?’” he says. “What is the expected distribution method? Is this a single event or an ongoing program? Has the customer qualified the recipient and is there a required commitment after receipt, or is this a no-strings-attached giveaway?”

That line of questioning calibrates the bag with the event or promotion. But the reality is, people own a lot of imprinted bags – many of which can perform the same function. The solution is simple on the surface but tougher to put into practice: Find a functional bag that stands out. “Unless it has some outstanding feature, not too many people are excited about getting another tote,” Wilson says. To find a unique niche, he recently started pitching wine bags for carrying bottle deposits. “Here in Ontario,” explains the Canadian distributor, “the bottles are returned for deposit in the bags and customers put their full bottles in them after returning the empties.”

But every bag – even smaller ones at lower price points that others already have – offer a built-in advantage: the ability to carry some-

thing valuable inside. One of Bags by Troy Sunshade's clients, a tire store chain, ordered 7" x 3" zip-top bags and put tire gauges inside each one to give to customers who purchased a new set of tires. "An orthodontist put a toothbrush, toothpaste, pick and rubber bands in a 10.5" x 5.5" bag and gave it to patients with braces," Hollinger says. "And a lawyer gave portfolios to clients so they could keep all of their legal paperwork together in one place."

Carrying On

While it can be difficult to predict where bag sales will go in the near future because of the number of different types and applications, sup-

pliers and distributors say general sales will stay strong. While most sales forecasts depend on the kinds of bags being offered, says Shih, "as long as a bag is designed well with a reasonable price point, the product will have a market."

Dickson believes their value as a promotional item will continue to be noticed because of the high number of impressions they offer as well as their long lifespan. "Backpacks are definitely in the forefront as business travelers trend toward a comfortable and functional solution to frequent travel. Plus, they offer a number of decorating options," he says. "We're also seeing growth in more trendy and fashionable lines, especially in women's bags. Clients are

more and more often looking for brands and designs that are edgy and on track with what is current in retail."

"We will continue to see tech features added," says Peplow. "Whether they're iPad- or tablet-specific, the features that simplify the on-the-go lifestyle will continue to be popular." Hollinger trusts that bags won't soon be losing their top spot on the list of most popular promo items because of their high visibility and, thus, strong ROI for the client. "Bags have always been in the top three promotional categories, along with wearables and pens," she says, "and I believe it will remain that way."

Sara Lavenduski is an intern for Wearables.

THE ESSENTIALS

With so many types of bags in the promo market, matching your clients with the perfect one for their needs can seem challenging. But when all else fails, you can't go wrong with five core products.

THE BACKPACK

Consider a zippered or cinch backpack as a go-to item for your client's target event. "The flexible price range of backpacks ensures you can find the right bag, whatever your budget," says Kevin Shih, product manager at Preferred Nation ([asi/79384](#)). The variety of styles and fabrics makes the backpack a strong choice for many applications, particularly as a convention or trade show giveaway, 5K or race accessory, or for school and college promotions.

Preferred Nation ([asi/79384](#); circle 127 on Free Info Card) offers the Sports Computer backpack (P3410) that includes a 15.4" padded laptop sleeve and a butterfly open pocket with buckle closure for a tennis racket.



THE BUSINESS BAG

The all-purpose leather business bag carries important documents and folders, as well as laptops and tablets. Many suppliers are now designing them in unisex styles, so they make a great employee incentive gift or premium program item, especially with an embossed logo. Also, consider neoprene laptop or tablet sleeves for media and tech promotions.

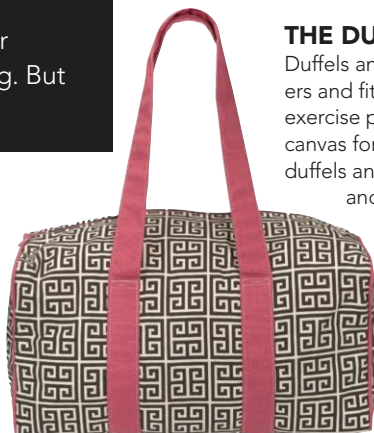
The leather carry-all business case (B8802) from Ashlin BPG Marketing ([asi/37138](#); circle 94 on Free Info Card) is made of stone wash cowhide and is available in four color options.



THE DUFFEL

Duffels and gym bags remain popular with travelers and fitness buffs. Think nylon for gym and exercise promotions, and eye-popping printed canvas for women on the go. "Travel bags, like duffels and expeditors, are great for client trips, and beach bags are a staple corporate gift," says Amye Kurson, principal/designer at Ame & Lulu ([asi/35232](#)). "They're great-looking and multifunctional, so they can be used for anything."

Ame & Lulu ([asi/35232](#); circle 128 on Free Info Card) offers this printed overnight canvas duffel bag (DF053) that features a zippered main compartment and side pocket.



THE TOTE

The multifunctional tote remains popular, especially when it's made of recycled materials and offers a large imprint area. Consider trade shows, conferences, grocery stores, hospitality organizations, travel agencies and eco-friendly promotions.

The canvas tote duck bag (7-1812226616-6) from BAGGU ([asi/38029](#); circle 129 on Free Info Card) is made of recycled cotton canvas and features an adjustable shoulder strap and handles.



THE UTILITY BAG

Though smaller than a traditional promotional bag, utility bags (like zipper-top document bags and cosmetic pouches) still pack a punch with generous imprint areas. Pitch them to financial institutions, health-care facilities, service stations and spas or cosmetic counters.

Bags by Troy Sunshade ([asi/92252](#); circle 130 on Free Info Card) offers the zipper-top nylon bag (001) in a variety of colors, sizes and fabrics.





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CROSSED PATHS +

If you're not routinely trying to cross-sell clients both apparel and other promotional products, you're leaving cash on the table.

BY CHRISTOPHER RUVO

Chances are it happens every time you're at a favorite fast-food joint. "Would you like fries with that?" comes the question. Indeed you would. Fries go wonderfully with the hamburger you just ordered. Make it a large.

So what just happened? In addition to possibly adding a few pounds you'll have to run off over the weekend, you've just been cross-sold. And if the pierced teen pushing stomach-bombing burgers can cross-sell successfully, rest assured, ad specialty sales professional: You can too.

In fact, you're fortunate. Just as you know burgers pair well with fries, you should realize that buyers interested in imprinted apparel may also desire hard-good promotional products, and vice versa.

Even seasoned sales professionals miss opportunities to cross-sell clothing and other products. In so doing, they're leaving big stacks of Benjamins on the table. "Cross-selling is critical," says Anita Brooks, president of Mississippi-based ASB Marketing, a Geiger (*asi/202900*) affiliate. "Not only is it extra revenue – it demonstrates your expertise and your value, and it keeps competitors out of your sandbox."

Since *Wearables* knows you don't want competitors messing around in your sandbox, we're keen to help you master cross-selling, ensuring you capture your clients' spend on hard products and apparel. As such, we mined the brains of the experts for advice that will have you cross-selling like a pro in no time.

"We Do That Too"

As the president of San Francisco-based Creative Marketing Concepts (*asi/170631*), Zachary Tyler has sold millions of dollars worth of promotional products and spearheaded rapid growth (up 35% during 2012) at the distributorship, named one of the Bay Area's fastest-growing company's last year. Even so, he still kicks himself when he thinks back to the cash that slipped through his fingers with one client.

Back in his earlier days in the industry, Tyler worked with a buyer at a hospital who purchased

about \$50,000 annually in hard goods. Tyler assumed that if apparel was needed too, the buyer would ask for it. “I assumed wrong,” he says. Then, four years into what was already a lucrative relationship, Tyler popped the question: “What are you doing for apparel?” The buyer was surprised; she didn’t know he could provide wearables, too.

Already committed to working with Tyler because of his stellar service, the buyer started purchasing T-shirts and caps from him to the tune of about \$20,000 annually in addition to the spending on hard goods. She also referred him to buyers in other departments within the hospital – people who controlled purse strings in human resources and other departments that had budgets to burn on decorated threads. While Tyler’s cross-selling with the initial buyer significantly increased his book of business across multiple channels in the hospital, he believes the sales expansion could have started sooner. “It’s amazing how many clients will be fond of you, but still think of apparel and products as separate services,” he says. “It’s a very basic but important practice: You have to inform your clients that you can provide both.”

Clueing clients in can be as simple as asking a question. Not long ago, a local FedEx office contacted Yorkville, NY-based A&P Master Images to order Post-it notepads and pens that were to bear FedEx Ground Service branding. During the discussion, A&P owner Howard Potter asked if the buyer had any apparel needs. The buyer hadn’t known that Potter could provide apparel too, but once it was clear that he could, FedEx ordered 50 hooded sweatshirts for staffers on top of the pens and notepads. “We have to remember to ask those kinds of questions,” says Brooks. “It doesn’t just benefit us. In the end, we’ll save our clients time and make things easier on them – and they’ll love us for it.”

Get Your Pairings Right

While some product pairings – sunglasses and ball caps, anyone? – are easy to nail down, others aren’t as obvious. Nonetheless, combining the right duds and doodads to maximize the promotional effect of a client’s campaign is essential. To be a cross-selling star, you must be well-versed in the breadth of offerings in both categories and anticipate how different items

can work together to capture measurable ROI for a client.

Late last year, CEO Tom Rector and his team at Indianapolis-based Rector Communications (*asi/305623*) leveraged their expertise to pull off a client-pleasing cross-sell with AT&T. A vendor at the Indiana Apartment Association Trade Show, Rector’s booth drew large crowds eager to see and receive the various promotional products he was giving away. The lines at the booth – and the way attendees were pointing out to others where they could get the giveaways – were a perfect demonstration of the power of promotional products.

Impressed by all the activity, a regional marketing director for AT&T in attendance approached Rector. The resulting discussion centered on how AT&T was in need of items to give to university students at special events held at Indiana apartment complexes where there is collegiate housing. The idea was to provide memorable giveaways that would encourage students to sign up for AT&T’s U-verse – and to interest their friends in the service. Since young adults were the target audience, the products had to have a hip cachet.

PERFECT PAIRINGS

Like bread and butter, certain pairings of apparel and promotional products go together perfectly. Here are a few to consider selling:



Winter Jackets and Ice Scrapers

If your clients are buying a nice jacket like the First Ascent Downlight Sweater Jacket (FA800) from SanMar (*asi/84863*; circle 98 on Free Info Card), chances are end-users could wear it on days when they’ll also need an ice scraper, such as this polystyrene deluxe windshield scraper (SM-1611) from Bullet (*asi/42424*; circle 112 on Free Info Card). The SanMar jacket comes in a ladies’ companion style as well (FA801).



Water-Resistant Jackets and Umbrellas

Fight back against those rain-dreary days by pairing the wind- and water-resistant 100% polyester Peninsula soft-shell jacket (5518) from Fossa Apparel (*asi/55141*; circle 113 on Free Info Card) with this nylon folding umbrella (2050-03) from Leed’s (*asi/66887*; circle 106 on Free Info Card), which includes reflective material on the canopy for optimal visibility at night.

LEARN IT LIVE!

New to the industry? Learn valuable sales tips by attending the Distributor Success track at **The ASI Show** Dallas (Wednesday, February 6). This full-day slate of courses will teach you both the basic and advanced tips to jump-start your sales.

Kicking around ideas, Rector suggested that AT&T start with T-shirts that say, "I Got 99 Problems But AT&T Ain't One." (For the hip-hop-challenged, the line is a reference to a popular song by rapper Jay-Z.) To complement the tees, Rector recommended the marketing director invest in silicone iPhone speakers, another product that would appeal to the tech-savvy demographic. Loving both ideas, the AT&T executive decided to purchase 500 T-shirts and 750 speakers. And because Rector inquired whether the buyer needed apparel or other products for staff, another 26 shirts – Nike polos with AT&T logos – were sold. Says Rector: "Whether our initial conversation is about pens or polos and T-shirts, either of those directions will lead to the other. We know the products and industry so we can consult, offering different ideas that will help our clients."

Tracey Carr could say the same thing. Combining extensive product knowledge with a consultative selling approach, the owner of Ontario-based Proforma Venture Two Marketing (*asi/491564*) has deftly cross-sold a range of clients. Recently, she created a package for a heavy equipment manufacturer that

included toques, multi-tool knives, soft-shell jackets, and a tape measure with magnetic tape. The buyer was initially only interested in a single hard good to give away to employees, but Carr explained the enhanced impact that could be gained from including apparel and multiple hard products. The buyer bought in, and the package combo Carr suggested was just right for the manufacturer's steely working men. "It's really about understanding your client and the audience, and finding products that will be effective for them," says Carr.

When creating cross-sell combinations of apparel and hard goods, keep in mind you have the chance to up-sell clients, especially when it comes to apparel. Typically, name brands don't carry a lot of weight with buyers on hard goods, but they can prove pivotally important with wearables. So if a buyer who initially wanted travel mugs is now interested in polo shirts too, make sure to show him name-brand styles as part of your good-better-best presentation, discussing with him how a name brand can improve the perceived value of the buyer's organization. "The Nikes and Reeboks," Rector says, "spend a lot of market-

ing dollars creating an image and culture some clients definitely will pay for."

Sampling Is Believing

When cross-selling, sometimes samples can prove instrumental in influencing buyers to purchase both apparel and other products – even when they're not interested at first.

Consider the case of John Resnick and the town of Westwood, MA. After an approximately 20-year hiatus, Westwood last year decided to reintroduce the tradition of an annual community day. Resnick, a partner at Boston-based Proforma Printing & Promotion (*asi/300271*), worked with Westwood on the special event, providing signs, banners, buttons, wristbands and more. He tried to sell the town hats and T-shirts too, but the community day planning committee members declined, saying they didn't want caps and that they were buying shirts from a different vendor. Undeterred, Resnick had a sample hat with a logo created and gave it to a town director. After about a week, he had to follow up to prod the director to show the committee the hat, but ultimately the headwear made it before the eyes of the

Tank Tops and Sunglasses

Sure, ballcaps and sunglasses are a great pairing. But fun, trendy eyewear like these plastic sunglasses (Sun-101-S) from BamBams (*asi/38228*; circle 114 on Free Info Card) are also an excellent complement piece to hip tank tops, such as this unisex fine jersey tank (2408) from American Apparel (*asi/35297*; circle 110 on Free Info Card). After all, if you're sporting a tank, you're likely doing so in a climate where sunglasses are a must.



Golf Shirts and Golf-Themed Products

Is your client running a golf fundraiser? Are they hosting a golf outing to say thank you to valued clients or employees? If so, craft a winning one-two giveaway for the event by suggesting your client provide the Vansport micro mélange polo (2650) from Vantage Apparel (*asi/93390*; circle 115 on Free Info Card) with this golf ball-shaped stress reliever with keychain (LKC-GF04) from Ariel Premium Supply Inc. (*asi/36730*; circle 116 on Free Info Card).



decision-makers. “They loved it,” Resnick says, and an order for hats was placed.

The cross-selling didn’t stop there, though. After realizing there was a shortfall of shirts, Westwood tried to buy more from Resnick’s competitor, but the vendor proved difficult with a time-crunched deadline, requiring a pre-payment that the town could not meet. Impressed with Resnick’s service and aware he could provide quality wearables and other products efficiently, the town decided to purchase the additional T-shirts from him. Through hat and shirt sales, Resnick doubled his revenue on the Westwood deal to about \$10,000. “You’ve got to try to cross-sell at every opportunity,” he says. “You never know where it will lead.”

The power of tangible examples can also compel clients to buy hard goods. At A&P Master Images, Potter has a showroom where he features different types of creatively embellished apparel and about 200 products he has imprinted for clients, from padfolios to water bottles and mugs. Recently, two owners of a

local coffee shop came into the showroom to order staff T-shirts. As one woman was preparing to place the order, the other noticed coffee mugs on display. “You can do mugs too?” she asked. Yes, Potter could. He ended up with an

order for the shirts and 36 mugs. “Our showroom lets them know we can help them out with apparel and a lot more,” says Potter. “It earns us another \$50,000 to \$100,000 every year.”

Christopher Ruvo is a staff writer for Wearables.

POWER UP APPAREL SALES

Research from the Advertising Specialty Institute shows that wearables account for 32% – about \$6 billion – of industry revenue. While breakdowns vary by distributorship, many report that wearables comprise between 20% and 40% of their business. Firms interested in increasing their apparel sales can start by following these three steps:

Improve Apparel Knowledge: Attend trade shows, meet with apparel supplier reps, and track industry and retail trends to stay informed of what emerging and established apparel styles may appeal to different buyers and audiences.

Train Salespeople to Cross-Sell: If you or your salespeople are working on a hard-goods deal, you should also be suggesting apparel as a complementary option, and vice versa.

Create a Showroom: Set up an attractive showroom, modeled on a retail store setting if possible, in which you display a range of the apparel and other products you have provided for clients. When feasible, have prospects and clients visit the showroom.

coming next issue what’s coming up in the February issue of *Wearables*



Who Is The Top Decorator?

Our industry is full of artists who create amazing things with just ink and a T-shirt. In our new Top Decorator series, we put them to the test. Check out the beginning of this year-long competition to find out who is a contender for the crown.

An Oeuvre Of Outerwear

Jackets don’t come cheap, but they certainly can make an impact for clients seeking an excellent piece of apparel. We examine all the price points of these coats, and leave you with the sales tips you need to sell them.

Rising To The Occasion

As a distributor, you know you have to go further than normal to impress clients and keep them for life. Here’s your dose of inspiration: examples of account executives and owners who went above and beyond, and wowed their customers in the process.

Shrink Wrap

There used to be a time when clothes were guaranteed to shrink in the wash, but today’s technology has created garments that always run true to size. Our “Cheat Sheet” section examines these fabrics and gives you the knowledge you need.

And much, much more!



ash city's SECOND ACT

At the height of his company's success, Garry Hurvitz has decided to make major changes. What does the future hold for Ash City?

BY MICHELE BELL



Ash City (asi/37143) Owner and Founder Garry Hurvitz has built his apparel company into one of the 10 largest suppliers in the industry. And yet, Hurvitz has decided to hire his replacement.

Chances are, you've never met — or even laid eyes on — Garry Hurvitz, the founder, sole owner and enigmatic head of *Counselor* Top 40 supplier Ash City (asi/37143). This isn't because he doesn't like you. Hell, he may even invite you to his famous wine tasting fete in Vegas this month. But he'll be the guy in the back, smiling as you drink his carefully selected and curated wines chosen specifically from his collection.



Elson Yeung and Mabel Kwok – the product line manager and director of product development of Ash City (asi/37143), respectively – have been two of the main stalwarts behind growing Ash City's reputation as a fashion leader in the industry.

Behind the scenes is Hurvitz's comfort zone, where he observes with the watchful eye of someone who's built the business he started in his mid-teens to the behemoth it is now. As a prototypical entrepreneur, Hurvitz is brilliant but eccentric, hands-on yet ADD, charismatic though cantankerous. This is why he has handlers – a top-tier team that he's surrounded himself, people who let Hurvitz be Hurvitz.

David Woods (who very much fills the role as Hurvitz's right-hand man, *consigliere* and voice of reason at the company) maintains that Hurvitz is an entrepreneur in the truest sense of the word. "They don't think or operate the way most people do, but they're the ones who do all the work and take all the risks," Woods says. "They may not be the easiest people to deal with all the time, but you have to respect their sheer drive, determination and talent for staying focused, recognizing their strengths and limitations and building a successful company."

It's clear the success of Ash City is a product of Hurvitz's singular vision. The Richmond Hill, Ontario-based supplier has steadily held its rank as one of the 10 biggest suppliers in the industry; it banked \$136.5 million in revenue in 2011 and is likely to top that figure substantially in 2012. Elson Yeung, the company's product line manager and design wunderkind, was named a *Wearables* Trendsetter, part of an elite group who set the style quotient in the industry. Ash City is a finalist in five *Counselor* Distributor Choice Awards categories, is also up for PPPC's Supplier of the Year, and has garnered numerous other industry accolades for being the best of the best. Plus, the company once known primarily as an outerwear provider has in the last five years increased its market share in overall apparel categories like polos and women's wear to become an industry style and service leader.

So naturally at this vital moment, Hurvitz has essentially decided to hire his successor. Come again?

Like a Rolling Stone

Hurvitz's beginnings very much fit the profile of a strong-minded entrepreneur. A street smart autodidact in his younger days, he left school in his early teens and, through sheer force of will, built an apparel company on a foundation of selling Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin T-shirts at fairs throughout Canada. Consider that GH Enterprises – an early incarnation of Ash City, which Hurvitz has self-financed since 1993 – started over 35 years ago in a tiny office in Toronto with only Hurvitz and one other employee. Today, Ash City's facility in Richmond Hill (part of the Greater Toronto Area) is 200,000 square feet, with another facility in Lenexa, Kansas that's just over 100,000 square feet. The company has grown by leaps and

bounds, but Hurvitz, ever the iconoclastic outsider, did it all without the glad-handing and schmoozing that so many others in the industry rely on to get ahead.

So how has Ash City done it? The company continues to leverage its undeniable strengths, including a major emphasis on sartorial style. Its original, fashion-focused design has given birth to an entire new line, Core365, and 39 new styles being launched this month alone. Its UTK Warm.Logik line – which many clients have compared to the quality and aesthetic sense of The North Face and Patagonia – have created an easy-to-understand outerwear technology standard. “The gap between retail and

Winds of Change

Sourcing apparel overseas is difficult and trying work. From quality assurance issues to rapid-fire commodity price swings, the challenges are endless. To ensure success, a supplier needs a vigorous on-location presence. So it's little surprise that Hurvitz, who was named *Counselor's* International Person of the Year in 2012, spends upwards of 14 weeks per year abroad. He has built such a voluminous and loyal network of contacts overseas, and has so much experience in dealing with factories directly during his many trips, that when economic and raw materials conditions become tumultuous, Ash City has the benefit of foresight. It can

“True entrepreneurs may not be the easiest people to deal with all the time, but you have to respect their sheer drive, determination and talent for staying focused, recognizing their strengths and limitations and building a successful company.”

David Woods, Ash City ([asi/37143](#))

our world of promotional apparel,” says Mabel Kwok, the company's director of product development, “is becoming more narrow.”

Meanwhile, its streamlined operations systems ensure a 99% accuracy rate on the near-1,200 orders it processes daily. “Our strength, due in large part to the eight weeks of training we give our employees, is to give clients a ‘good, better, best’ option for the promotions they’re creating for their customers,” says Cathy Rumsby, vice president of customer relations. “Where we try to shine is by responding, quickly and creatively when clients say, ‘make me look good.’”

Mike Emoff, owner of the Dayton, OH-based distributor Shumsky ([asi/326300](#)), works closely with Ash City, as they are one of the distributor's preferred vendors. “Ash City is excellent at developing relationships in the field – they understand what we want, make an effort to meet with me and my team individually and make sales calls with us when we ask them to,” says Emoff. “But what really differentiates them is their service and designs – they excel in both areas in ways that other companies do not.”

inoculate itself so the pricing and availability of its products stay client-friendly.

Clearly Hurvitz's sense of what's best for Ash City – particularly in his ability to identify people with specific niche talents – has driven the company forward. There is Woods' steady hand. Kwok's and Yeung's design sensibilities. Tom Kennedy's ability to streamline the production process as the company's vice president of distribution and operations. The talented and ubiquitous sales triumvirate of Joe DeVault, Chris Turner and Chris Clark and Neil Piitz, a legend in the Canadian marketplace, who's now working with the company. Geta Navodarszky, the woman who methodically – borderline obsessively, which is what you want in a sourcing and safety director – checks the ability of every item to withstand stains, the elements and wear and tear while making sure they adhere to safety codes. Then there's Rome Rousselle, one of the core group of employees who've been with Hurvitz for more than 25 years. Rousselle's knowledge of all things SKU, inventory and production related is

downright *Rainman*-esque. These are the types of people that Hurvitz has chosen to surround himself with, and who are, he says, responsible for making the company what it is today.

For Hurvitz, though, what defines his role as a leader is his ability to know that he's taken the company as far as he can. Hence, the recent announcement of Doug Hayes as the company's new president and CEO, thereby effectively replacing himself.

“Ash City with Doug Hayes at the helm, in addition to the announcements we will be making in a few months will tell everyone where we are heading and how we will get there,” Hurvitz says.

“Our three-five year plan is to triple our sales.” And while Hurvitz will retain control over the sourcing and supply chain elements in their entirety, the new president and CEO in charge will undoubtedly shake-up the status quo in one of the industry's largest supplier companies.

Hayes joins the company from Crocs Inc., where he served as president of its Americas division. He says that as a Canadian and having worked in the U.S. for the past four years, he has long admired Ash City and the business Hurvitz has built in both countries. “If I can keep the same entrepreneurial spirit that Garry has built within the company and add the managerial disciplines that I bring to the table without putting out the flame, I'll be happy,” says Hayes.

“My goal is to let Garry, the consummate entrepreneur, drive the bus but maybe show him where the guardrails should be,” he laughs. “I know how to run a company, but I'll be relying on Garry and David Woods to help me learn this business. I can tell you, though, that what I want is to take Ash City in new directions that will make us bigger, better and more profitable. It's not about standing still.”



Doug Hayes

Michele Bell is a senior editor for *Counselor* and the editor of *Supplier Global Resource*.

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Sweet Music

When The Bensonians (Fairfield University's male a cappella group) came a calling, Proforma Printing & Promotion (*asi/300094*) got to work designing a versatile piece that the singers could wear under a blazer at their performances. The distributor put together a garment using a fashion-fit V-neck tee (982) from Anvil Knitwear (*asi/36350*; circle 153 on Free Info Card) and Digital Cadprintz Transfers from Transfer Express (*asi/91804*;

circle 154 on Free Info Card). "Our client wanted a fashion-forward T-shirt and a creative design that would complement the garment," says Mark J. Resnick, co-owner and partner. "Once we learned they would be wearing a blazer over the shirt, we immediately came up with the tie concept and they loved it. The heat press gave us the most flexibility in terms of decoration locations, logo placement on the garment, ink colors and cost."



The Heat is on: The order size was perfect for a heat press. "The quantity was only 24 tees, which would have made this too costly on a traditional press," Resnick explains. "The screens alone would make this cost-prohibitive, with five screens plus names and numbers [on the back]."

Fairfield University
Glee Club

Chest to Chest: A variety of design variations were proposed before The Bensonians settled on the heat-pressed tie and left chest logo. Says Resnick, "They were looking for a design that would work well when wearing a blazer over the shirt."

All Knotted Up: Proforma Printing & Promotion has been using their heat press frequently as clients continue to ask for non-traditional decorating locations. "Now, customers want decoration in places on garments that make it difficult for other methods," says Resnick. "For example, using a heat press allowed us to get the tie right up to the top of the shirt, and the semi-matte finish on the transfer gave it a nice pop."



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