

# WEARABLES

THE EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITY [www.wearablesmag.com](http://www.wearablesmag.com)

January 2014

# Grow

## YOUR SHOP

FIVE MAJOR  
MOVES  
FOR SCREEN  
PRINTERS

# 27

FANTASTIC  
NEW  
PRODUCTS

**GO FOR THE GOLD:**  
TOP PROMOS FOR  
THE OLYMPICS

**HEADS UP  
FOR OUR HATS  
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- HOLD A HALFTONE DOT
- CREATE AN ALL-OVER PRINT

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asi/59528





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Graphic Designer



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**NEW**

## F499

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- Forest
- Navy
- Dark Heather Grey
- Black
- White



**NEW**

## F496

FLEX FLEECE CREWNECK PULLOVER DROP SHOULDER SWEATSHIRT  
Unisex  
XXS | XS | S | M | L | XL | 2XL

- Cranberry
- Forest
- Navy
- Dark Heather Grey
- Black
- White



**NEW**

## F498

FLEX FLEECE DROP SHOULDER PULLOVER HOODIE  
Unisex  
XXS | XS | S | M | L | XL | 2XL

- Cranberry
- Forest
- Navy
- Dark Heather Grey
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asi/56842



Stand out in any crowd with this retro-cool newcomer: *Gildan's new 92900 Ring Spun Fleece Full Zip Jacket*. The sporty relaxed collar and contrast piping give it a cool vintage feel. The 9-oz. premium ring spun cotton/polyester fleece has just the right softness and substance. It's definitely worthy of attention... especially yours. See it up close at [myGildan.com](http://myGildan.com)

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TRADESHOWS IN JANUARY



# WEARABLES

JANUARY 2014 VOLUME 18, Number 1 [www.wearablesmag.com](http://www.wearablesmag.com)

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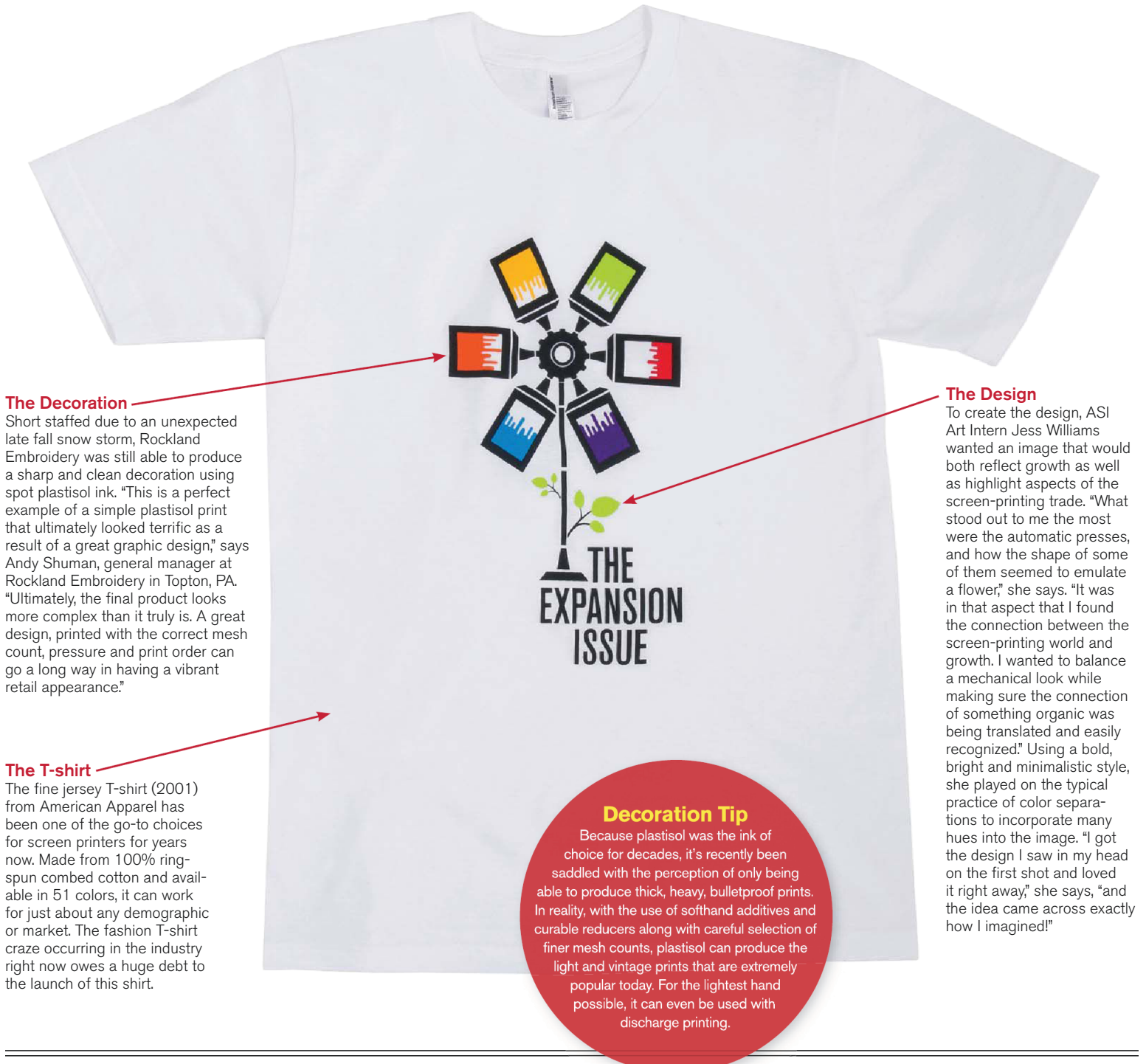
Hanes Beefy-T. Invented for screen printers. Embellished for generations.



## Flower Power

The January issue of *Wearables* is all about growth and expansion. To reflect that ambition for screen printers, we had a T-shirt screen printed with an original design. The shirt was provided by American Apparel (asi/35297; circle 161 on Free Info Card); the decoration

was screen printed by Rockland Embroidery (circle 162 on Free Info Card); and the design was created by ASI Art Director Hillary Haught and Art Intern Jess Williams. Here's a look into creating the cover.



### The Decoration

Short staffed due to an unexpected late fall snow storm, Rockland Embroidery was still able to produce a sharp and clean decoration using spot plastisol ink. "This is a perfect example of a simple plastisol print that ultimately looked terrific as a result of a great graphic design," says Andy Shuman, general manager at Rockland Embroidery in Topton, PA. "Ultimately, the final product looks more complex than it truly is. A great design, printed with the correct mesh count, pressure and print order can go a long way in having a vibrant retail appearance."

### The T-shirt

The fine jersey T-shirt (2001) from American Apparel has been one of the go-to choices for screen printers for years now. Made from 100% ring-spun combed cotton and available in 51 colors, it can work for just about any demographic or market. The fashion T-shirt craze occurring in the industry right now owes a huge debt to the launch of this shirt.

### The Design

To create the design, ASI Art Intern Jess Williams wanted an image that would both reflect growth as well as highlight aspects of the screen-printing trade. "What stood out to me the most were the automatic presses, and how the shape of some of them seemed to emulate a flower," she says. "It was in that aspect that I found the connection between the screen-printing world and growth. I wanted to balance a mechanical look while making sure the connection of something organic was being translated and easily recognized." Using a bold, bright and minimalist style, she played on the typical practice of color separations to incorporate many hues into the image. "I got the design I saw in my head on the first shot and loved it right away," she says, "and the idea came across exactly how I imagined!"

### Decoration Tip

Because plastisol was the ink of choice for decades, it's recently been saddled with the perception of only being able to produce thick, heavy, bulletproof prints. In reality, with the use of soft-hand additives and curable reducers along with careful selection of finer mesh counts, plastisol can produce the light and vintage prints that are extremely popular today. For the lightest hand possible, it can even be used with discharge printing.



10 new vintage colors » 5 new silhouettes » nano collection





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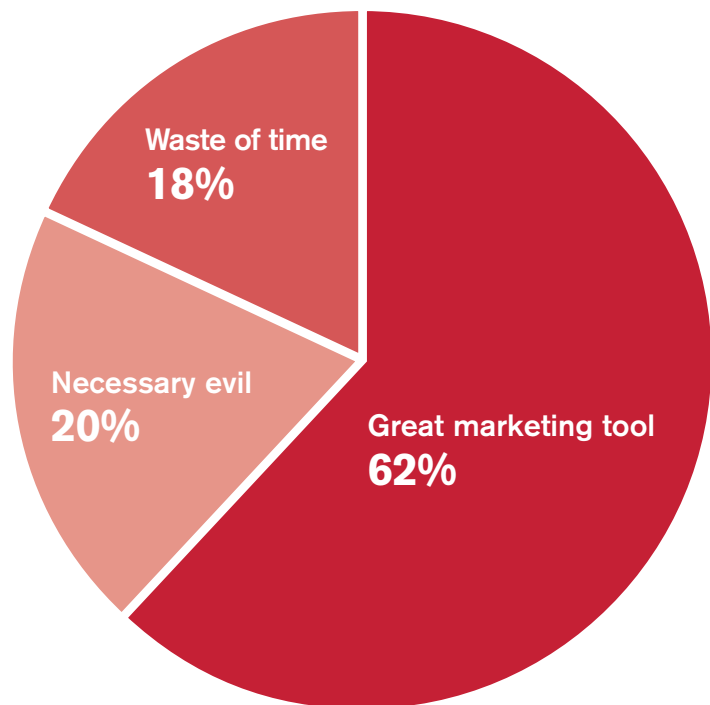
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## POLL

### Social Studies

On ASICentral.com, we asked: "Social media is a ..."



## VIDEO



### Better Business Travel

Constantly on the go, traveling business execs need comfortable, functional and stylish apparel that works for them. In this video, *Wearables* Editor C.J. Mittica spotlights the best garments and accessories to take along for the ride.

## EDUCATION

### Class is in Session

Want to boost your sales know-how, marketing insights or decoration capabilities? Then be sure to attend the slate of education sessions at The ASI Show Dallas, running from February 4-6. Visit [www.asishow.com](http://www.asishow.com) to register.



## NEWSLETTER

### In Winter, Make a Bundle

It's the right time of year for winter accessories. Cozy winter scarves and gloves are robust add-ons for your jacket and sweater sales. We examine the latest trends (touchscreen gloves!) and styles that dominate this category.



## CORRECTION

On page 60 of the November/December 2013 issue of *Wearables*, the ASI number for T-Shirt Tycoon Solutions was incorrectly listed. The correct number is asi/87000.



**S&S**ACTIVEWEAR  
THE 2014 COLLECTION

# THE 2014 COLLECTION.

With this year's addition of **Burnside** and **Oakley**, The 2014 Collection from S&S Activewear now carries over 70 different brands – the most exceptional selection of imprintable apparel, headwear and bags available from a single source. And all of it is backed by outstanding customer service and a central, fully-stocked warehouse, delivering to 35 states in one to two days. For a copy of our new 2014 catalog, call us at **800-523-2155**, or visit our website at **ssactivewear.com**. Welcome to the new style year.

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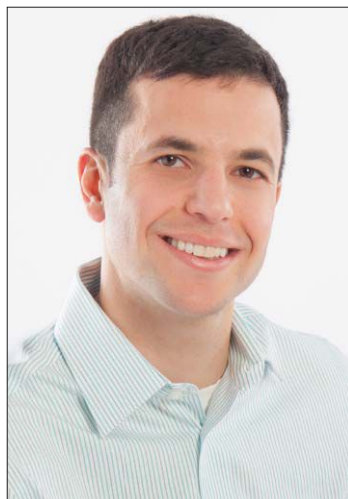
## IN WITH THE NEW

**I**t's a new year, so it's time to look into the future. This is your chance to map out your goals and try something different. What are the new initiatives you want to undertake? How can you get there? What challenges lie ahead? All of it must be taken into consideration.

The sense of the new courses throughout this issue, which we have dubbed "The Expansion Issue." If you're thinking big this year for your screen-printing shop, let our cover story serve as the road map for your journey. We detail the five major steps you can take with your business, starting from humble beginnings as an at-home operation and flourishing into a diversified decorator that can serve every need of your clients. For each step, we provide the key considerations you should take before making the leap, and profile other shops who have been down that road before. Growth doesn't come without its challenges, and we hope this guide will help you manage them and grow appropriately.

In addition, we have launched a New Product Guide that features the latest wares from industry suppliers – all new for 2014. They represent a tremendous reason to reach out to clients and let them know you've been thinking about their needs.

There is another key development for 2014 that I want to highlight. In our feature "Apparel's Newest Contender," we examine the story of Trimark Powered by Leed's (asi/66888) as it embarks on its national rollout in the U.S. It is significant because mega-supplier Polyconcept North America has jumped into the apparel arena. More importantly, the new venture has big ideas about decoration and turnaround times. As Leed's did with SureShip, I believe Trimark Powered by Leed's is poised to accelerate the speed of decorated apparel. And I believe there will be a domino effect in the industry, with other



**“What are the new initiatives you want to undertake? How can you get there?”**

suppliers prepared to follow suit.

Screen printers and decorators, pay very close attention to this: Distributors see wisdom in getting their decorated goods from a supplier. It reduces lead times and shaves down a step in the supply chain.

Moreover, it moves the burden away from the decorator or distributor if there is a decoration error. "The advantage to this is if Trimark messes up, I don't get charged for the extra jacket," says Leanne Fine, President of Pro-Max Inc. (asi/299705), who used Trimark Powered by Leed's for a decorated jacket order for a *Fortune* 100 client. "These jackets aren't cheap, and when you're talking \$50 or \$80 a jacket, that adds up. It makes it easier."

Decorators will not disappear, but expanded supplier decoration will be a challenge to your business. It's imperative to be a valued asset to your clientele. Make things easy. Bring creative solutions. Offer diversified capabilities. Be proactive in tracking and handling incoming blank shipments for your clients. And learn to deliver exceptional results without delays. Implement those standards today, and the future can be yours.

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 Carol Moore, corporate marketing coordinator for AIA Corporation (asi/109480): "I am in love with my North Face Osito Jacket. From the cozy fabric to the vibrant color, it is a phenomenal balance of style and comfort. When battling

the constantly changing Wisconsin temperatures, it is great to have a lightweight jacket that I can throw on or carry over my arm. (We're facing lows of 35° and highs of 60° as I am typing this!) While it is practical, the North Face brand and its expansive range of products not only meet the needs of folks young and old, but also are on-trend (especially in the cooler climates). It may be hard to look past the price tag when seeking some new winter gear, but I encourage you to slip one of these on and fall in love. The biggest battle will be choosing between all of the styles and colors they offer!"



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## THE NEED FOR SPEED

**T**hanks to the creativity of distributors and suppliers, our industry is about to set a new annual sales record and surpass an impressive milestone: \$20 billion in North American promotional product sales for 2013. We are in an exciting, fun, growing industry that provides the best return on investment of nearly any advertising medium. I take great pride in what everyone in our industry does every day, and hope you share my enthusiasm.

I'm equally proud of a new initiative ASI has been working on, the results of which will start appearing in our products and services in 2014. It's been so secret, and so important, that we created an internal code name, "Velocity," to represent its chief goal: Vital, lightning-quick data sharing and communication across the entire industry.

Velocity isn't a standalone product – it's an online data warehouse that you'll enter through the front door of ESP to access a whopping one terabyte of product data. (To put that number into perspective, a typical DVD stores about 4.5 gigabytes, and one terabyte is equal to 1,000 gigabytes.) This virtual storehouse will accommodate 1.24 million continuously updated products with over 12 million price points, 2.5 million product images, 450,000 virtual sample-ready images and 29 million product attributes from 3,400 ASI suppliers.

ASI has stored product data for decades. But this is the most flexible, complete, modern database in the history of the advertising specialty industry. It allows every product to be configurable and orders to be placed with complete confidence.

Velocity represents an enormous investment of time and resources



by ASI. Over 18 months, our technology and user experience teams identified every single product characteristic across every possible product and product category. In the shirt category alone, specs will go way beyond color and size to include sleeve length, fabric, imprint possibilities, collar shape, all associated charges and country of origin.

We're now compiling each and every detail into a data matrix that addresses the entire product spectrum – there are literally millions of combinations, each accommodated in our new data warehouse, and each in e-commerce-ready form.

With every conceivable product detail at hand, you'll be able to optimize each client presentation and proposal, eliminate guesswork, reduce inaccuracies and incomplete orders, and make time-consuming follow-up calls and e-mails a thing of the past.

ASI is working with dozens of the industry's largest suppliers to link their individual product databases directly with Velocity and ESP, which means distributors will gain instant access to the most accurate, reliable information available across every product category. Several suppliers are already implementing this live link, and we'll be adding others throughout 2014.

But Velocity isn't all we've been up to in 2013. I'm equally proud of our growing trade shows and events, record-setting educational offerings and certification program, award-winning magazines and global research studies you can use to prove the value and efficiency of promotional products. While unexpected challenges are a certainty in every industry, our hope is that ASI's multimillion-dollar investments in products and services help you achieve greater success in 2014 and beyond.

ASI very much appreciates your business. If there are additional ways we can help, I'm always eager to hear from you. Please e-mail me anytime at [tim.andrews@asicentral.com](mailto:tim.andrews@asicentral.com), or look me up at one of our ASI Shows in 2014. I look forward to learning what we can do to help you be even more successful.

**“This is the most flexible, complete, modern database in the history of the advertising specialty industry.”**



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# TRENDS

THE HOTTEST  
APPAREL AND  
ACCESSORIES

By Alissa Tallman

## In Your Vested Interest

### COZY, FUNCTIONAL AND

on-trend, vests are a must-have item – not just for those spending quality time in the outdoors during the cooler months, but for anyone seeking the latest in street fashion as well. Vests have become rather chic for everyday wear with clothing such as jeans and even skirts. Quilted styles in particular are very much in vogue and are selling well at retail establishments such as Abercrombie and J. Crew.

“Quilted items represent a key outerwear trend for both men and women this fall and winter,” says Joel Freet, national sales manager for Cutter & Buck (asi/47965). “The ‘puffer’ look is very strong at retail. It has a real business-friendly look and is perfect for the commuter on the go.” He adds that bright colors make vests even more smashing: “Apple green, for example, is a major sports and technology color that is growing in popularity.” That’s a winter trend worth warming up to.

### FASHION TIP

Button-downs and printed long-sleeved tees look stupendous when worn underneath quilted vests.

**Insulated vest (left)** (LQO00025) from Cutter & Buck (asi/47965; circle 91 on Free Info Card).

**Waterproof men’s vest (right)** (Boulder Vest) from Sun Mountain Sports Inc (asi/90139; circle 92 on Free Info Card)





# Hats

BY CHUCK ZAK

**ACCORDING TO FASHION** mythology, once JFK decided to forgo wearing a hat, he single-handedly put an end to a long sartorial tradition. But a quick perusal of visual history since then confirms that, while formal headwear may have declined in popularity, a thousand other styles survived where once Homburgs and Bowlers thrived. For the promotional industry, hats have always been popular, and that is for two reasons: One, they offer prime advertising space with maximum visibility and often daily exposure; the other is that they are just plain fun to wear. The examples featured in this showcase demonstrate why hats remain on top as fun and flattering fashion accessories.



Poly/cotton boonie hat (5826) features screened side vents, branch loops and a chin strap. Available from **Rothco** (asi/83708; circle 111 on Free Info Card).



Textured-stitch beanie (6759) is made in the USA from reclaimed cotton blended with polyester for a comfortable fit. Available from **Philadelphia Rapid Transit** (asi/77945; circle 94 on Free Info Card).



A large, playful pom-pom tops off this acrylic tri-color chunky-knit beanie (STC21) from **SanMar** (asi/84863; circle 121 on Free Info Card).



This comfy and warm men's hat (100774) made with acrylic rib-knit fabric and polyester sherpa lining is from Carhartt by **Broberry Manufacturing, Inc.** (asi/42057; circle 95 on Free Info Card).



This tri-color bucket hat (HE083) features colored-metal eyelets and is made from premium cotton twill. Available from **Grace Collection** (asi/57904; circle 123 on Free Info Card).



Distinctive and detailed waxy canvas hat (3724) features a wildlife-inspired design and Velcro closure. Available from **Dri Duck Traders** (asi/50835; circle 125 on Free Info Card).



Six-panel structured high-profile cap (6089) features a trendy flat visor with green under-visor and adjustable closure. Available from **Broder Bros. Co.** (asi/42090; circle 119 on Free Info Card).



This unstructured, low-profile polyester runner's cap (5091) featuring dry-mesh technology and pre-curved visor is from **McCreary's Tees** (asi/69885; circle 120 on Free Info Card).



Frayed seams lend a broken-in look that complements the relaxed style of this washed canvas ivy cap (2118) from **Mega Cap** (asi/70434; circle 122 on Free Info Card).

## Three Selling Tips

**1** **Recognize trends.** Hat styles are always evolving and new trends can be set off by high-profile celebrities or under-the-radar youth cultures. "The latest and greatest is the flat-bill cap," says David Chen, sales and marketing manager for Mega Cap, Inc. (asi/70434). "This style emerged from the surf and skate markets here in Southern California, and the momentum has carried over to corporate brands in the promo market as well." Chen is also boldly predicting a return of bucket hats, so start picking some favorites.

**2** **Maximize your sell.** Schools are a go-to customer for caps, but opportunities abound to grow each sale. "Schools have multiple ways of using caps," says Nate Dickman, senior account director for Leaderpromos (asi/287087). "The school can have caps with just the school name, then it can be broken down to caps specific for each group or organization within the school, such as sports teams, academic clubs or arts clubs." Dickman also pronounces himself a "big fan of photo sublimation" for schools and their various organizations as an easy way to personalize each cap with individual names and images.

**3** **Give 'em what they want.** "Find out regional trends before suggesting a style of hat," cautions Dickman, using the particular popularity of camo among his Midwest clients as an example. And though Chen acknowledges the persistence of conservative styles among corporate clients, he suggests offering "more fashion-forward clients" such as those in entertainment or the alcohol/beverage industry "trendier colors, custom fabrics, and unique decorating techniques other than regular embroidery or screen printing."



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# A Trend to Put Your Finger On

**GLOVES ARE A** favorite accessory. They're a high-visibility item and can be easily customized. Plus, they're always available in a plethora of brand-new styles and colors, guaranteeing end-user interest each winter.

"Gloves in all categories have been seeing success," says Kevin Xiao, vice president of Atteff International Inc. (asi/37455). "In particular, mechanics' gloves seem to be picking up steam, even though they are higher in price. Cowhide/canvas-backed gloves have also been very steady over the years."

One category that's been developing considerably is touch-screen gloves. "Touch-screen gloves are unique because they allow users to interact with their smart devices without any barriers," says Scott Henderson, PR and communications/partner for Glider Gloves (asi/57539). "The secret is in the science – it makes use of your body's own bioelectric field, which passes through specially made conductive fibers." He assures that this category of gloves is one to keep an eye on: "Touch-screen gloves are growing in popularity. The variety currently available in the marketplace is proof of that."

Mittens are also on-trend this season. "Mittens are convenient for the promotional industry because they fit a wide size range," says Shurli Allinott, president of Brandwear (asi/41545). She says mittens can be easily applied to many kinds of outdoors events. "Look at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, for example: Everyone had a red maple-leaf mitten, and lines went around the block to buy them."

## Decoration Tip

Thinner gloves can endure a quick hit of a screen print or heat transfer. For thicker winter gloves and mittens, look to embroidery. A personalized monogram may carry more cache with the end-user than a company icon.



**Double-lined touch-screen gloves** (U159390MBLCK) available from Glider Gloves (asi/57539; circle 101 on Free Info Card).



**Fingerless work gloves** (GL-F4517O) available from Atteff International Inc. (asi/37455; circle 103 on Free Info Card).



**Wool/acrylic/mohair mittens** available from Brandwear (asi/41545; circle 102 on Free Info Card).

## Three Reasons to Pitch Gloves

**1** Consider offering end-users several different types of gloves and mittens in regard to fabric. Investing in luxurious materials such as leather, cashmere and fur, if your budget allows, can be profitable.

**2** For a promotional sale, present gloves and mittens with matching scarves or hats to entice end-users. Implement bright colors and inventive patterns in addition to a visually stunning logo for each set.

**3** If you consider touch-screen gloves as part of a promotional plan, include a giveaway smartphone case with each purchase.



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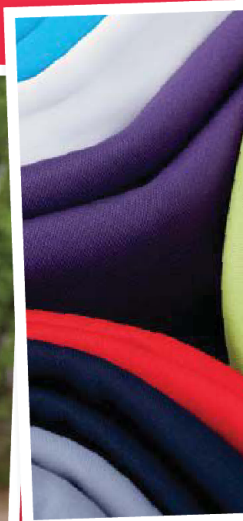
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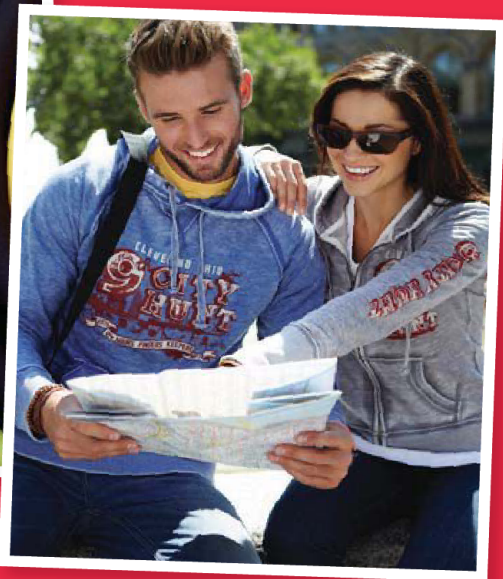
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# Half-Zip Cardigan

**CARDIGANS MAKE EXCELLENT** seasonal gifts for men and women of all age ranges and remain handy throughout the winter and into the spring and summer, too. This gorgeous half-zip cardigan (18701) hails from Trimark Sportswear Group (asi/92122; circle 106 on Free Info Card). Crafted with a supple and comfy cotton-sueded jersey-knit fabric, this sweater is perfect for a variety of settings, both indoor and outdoor, and is available in three colors: black, dark charcoal and indigo heather.

## Market Focus

With a touch of embroidery or silk screening, this cardigan would make an ideal promotional piece for any sports or outdoors-related industry; consider it for corporate gifting as well.

## Downtown Charm

This outfit oozes urban chic and provides superior protection from wintry weather at the same time.



**Wool hat (JAZ)** from Sunday Afternoons Inc. (asi/90134; circle 107 on Free Info Card)

## A Touch Of Grunge

This office-friendly ensemble includes a subtle nod to 1990s street wear for an original look.



**Beanie (AH91)** from S&S Activewear (asi/84358; circle 97 on Free Info Card)



**Heavyweight melton wool town coat (FW3200)** from Fersten Worldwide Inc. (asi/53974; circle 108 on Free Info Card).



**Denim jeans (MCB01724)** from Cutter & Buck (asi/47965; circle 91 on Free Info Card)



**Flat-front chinos (2578)** from Edwards Garment (asi/51752; circle 109 on Free Info Card)



**Combat boots (5050)** from Rothco (asi/83708; circle 111 on Free Info Card)





# Finally, Candy That's Good For You

**CANDY COLORS ARE** festive and playful, and hues like key lime, candy pink and lemon yellow are presenting a refreshingly unconventional color palette this winter. Although the usual traditional winter hues still apply, radiant neons and soft pastels will as well. Dare to consider that burnt orange tie or blue raspberry tee – it'll not only increase a company's visibility but also serve as evidence of a healthy dose of fashion savvy.



**Women's V-neck T-shirt** (3507) from Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788; circle 104 on Free Info Card)

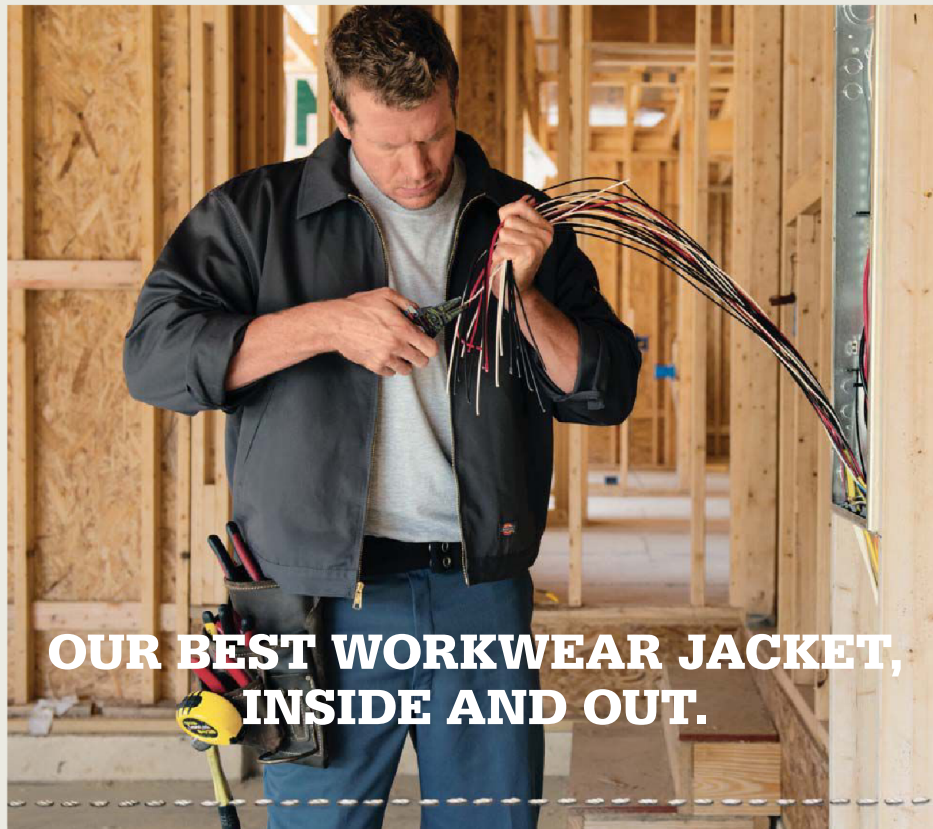


**Bright green watch** (10436) from TimeWorld USA (asi/91282; circle 105 on Free Info Card)

## AS SEEN AT... MILAN FASHION WEEK



◀ This amazing bubble gum-pink dress designed by Antonio Marras was showcased during Milan Fashion Week. Besides being eye-catching all on their own, pieces like this beckon for complementary accessories, either in matching candy hues that up the ante or solid neutrals that anchor things down a bit.



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## THE CHALLENGE

### “What’s a creative solution for improving cash flow?”

Whether you’re a distributor or screen printer, adequate cash flow is the heartbeat of your business. Without it, the life-blood of an organization ceases circulating, and fatal cardiac arrest can ensue. Unfortunately, your required cash stream may, at some point, dilute to a trickle, or simply not be robust enough to help fuel the growth you desire. Sure, options exist: Bank loans, borrowing from family and securing private equity are all examples. Still, these traditional avenues may sometimes be inaccessible. Even if they are available, they may not provide the necessary green as quickly as your company needs it.

Fortunately, there is an alternative. It is called invoice factoring, and its advantages include getting cash into your coffers expediently. Put simply, invoice factoring involves your business selling accounts receivables to a factoring company for cash. “With factoring, your receivables become real assets,” says Mike Bartels, vice president of Riviera Finance, a factoring provider.

In an invoice-factoring transaction, a factoring company pays you an advance of, typically, 75% to 80% of the value of the receivables. Then, the firm buying your invoices seeks to collect the full payment on the receiv-

ables from your customers. Once payment is obtained, the factoring company pays you the remaining percentage of the receivables you sold them, minus a fee that generally falls between 2% and 4% – and, as may be the case, interest on the cash advance.

Proponents of factoring note that this financing option can typically get working capital to companies quicker than bank loans. “We generally can help within a handful of days, usually within the week,” says Robert Cable, a Georgia-based principal with Liquid Capital, a factoring company. Beyond providing fast cash, factoring has other advantages that appeal to business owners. “It’s off the balance sheet,” says Cable. “There is no debt incurred.”

Factoring can potentially work for a range of companies. They include plucky start-ups that need cash to grow, successful established firms that have surpassed their bank line but need more capital to fuel greater revenue rises, and companies with a less-than-stellar financial history that may not be able to secure financing from a bank.

Within the imprinted apparel industry, factoring can have applications. Perhaps you’re a small distributorship with a few big clients on payment terms; the cash from those clients isn’t immediately forthcoming and you need money quickly. Factoring may be a viable option. Still, you don’t have to be in duress to factor. Perhaps you are a screen printer who wants to free up cash to invest in a new automatic press. Factoring can possibly help. “Sometimes,” says Bartels, “you just need the cash flow factoring provides to grow your business.”

Nonetheless, factoring experts point out that it’s pivotal to understand the difference between recourse factoring and non-recourse factoring. In the latter, the factoring company assumes the risk; if your customer doesn’t pay,



the factoring firm eats the loss. In recourse factoring, you are responsible for buying back invoices that aren’t paid by your customers after a pre-determined period of time. So, while rates may be lower in recourse factoring, there is less of a risk with non-recourse.

– Christopher Ruwo

### To Factor Or Not To Factor

When weighing whether to engage in invoice factoring, keep these pros and cons from the National Federation of Small Business in mind.

**PROS:** Factoring can get you fast cash to fund growth and save time you would have spent trying to collect payments. Plus, factoring firms are known to give up to an 80% advance on your receivables – more money, perhaps, than you could get from a bank.

**CONS:** Factoring could come at a higher price than a loan. Plus, you have less control once you sell receivables: A factoring provider could prevent you from doing business with a customer because of that client’s poor credit rating. Finally, customers will know you’re factoring, which they could take to mean that you’re having cash-flow issues. – CR

“We generally can help within a handful of days, usually within the week.”

– Robert Cable, Liquid Capital

## LEARN IT LIVE

To learn how to handle constant change and turmoil, be sure to attend “Today’s Leadership Principles: Guide Your Company Through Disruption to Success” at The ASI Show Dallas (Tuesday, February 4, 10:00 a.m.).

## MARKET SPOTLIGHT

# Olympic Opportunity

Jumpstart early-year sales by capitalizing on the Winter Games.

When it comes to selling imprinted apparel, the heady rush of the holiday season can often lead to a hangover in the early part of the new year. But this winter, there is a great opportunity to jumpstart January sales: The 2014 Winter Olympics. Being held in February in Sochi, Russia, the games present distributors and screen printers with the opportunity to generate sales with a variety of clients and prospects. “There will be a lot of stuff going on for distributors to potentially capitalize on,” says Mark Trotsuk, president of Boardroom Eco Apparel (asi/40705), which has provided imprinted wearables for Olympic licensees and distributors whose clients have run Olympic-themed promotions.

Ice rinks, ski resorts and sports bars are just a few of the businesses likely to be running special events and promotions in conjunction with the games – happenings in which scarves, beanies, hats, T-shirts, hoodies and fleeces bearing the business’s branding can play a part. Consider, too, that thanks to Olympic fever, these businesses could see a spike in sales, meaning promotional budgets in general could get beefier.

Hatfield Ice Arena is one business keen to capitalize on the potential of the Olympics. During the 2010 games in Vancouver, the Colmar, PA-based indoor hockey and ice skating rink offered free lessons to local youths. Planning similar promotions around Sochi, the

free lessons helped make the most of the surge of interest in the winter sports among area kids – an interest engendered by the 2010 games. “A lot of times, once the kids get started, they want to continue,” says Brian Peca, Hatfield Ice’s general manager. Significantly, Hatfield Ice experienced a boost in business in 2010, thanks in part to USA Hockey’s silver medal run, which fired the local passion for puck participation. Peca is hoping Sochi brings more of the same. “This is a big winter for us,” he says.

Come Olympic time, bars plan special promotions in a bid to attract crowds of patriotic patrons ready to cheer on Team USA. During the 2010 Vancouver games, for example, five popular adult beverage establishments in the Philadelphia area competed in the “Bar Stool Olympics,” vying to see who could sell the most \$3 Molson bottles while serving up Canadian dishes in a nod to the host country. Promotions similar – and not so similar – will be playing out in taprooms this winter, too. Don’t be surprised to find ski destinations getting in on the act, either. Telluride, the famous Colorado resort, was considering plans to host events supporting two local professional skiers, should they qualify to compete at this year’s games. Imprinted wearables and hard-good promotional products can figure into any of these initiatives.

As distributors and screen printers pursue business this winter, it is absolutely pivotal to refrain from creating imprinted designs that infringe on any Olympic trademarks. Congress has granted the USOC – the non-

profit responsible for training and funding U.S. teams – all commercial use of Olympic imagery and terminology, including the word “Olympic” and the symbol of the five-interlocked rings. The USOC is adamant about protecting its brand, and stepping over the line could bring down its wrath. So exercise caution, but don’t let that stop you from pursuing winter sales opportunities that only come around every four years. – CR

## Product Picks

Fun and fashion-forward, the “Flyer” (713) is a great piece for events and promotions targeting youthful end-users. It features an outer shell of 100% polyester microfiber with acrylic fur. Available from Pedigree (asi/71107; circle 118 on Free Info Card).



Comfortable, trendy and “green,” this sublimated unisex scarf (580032S) is made from recycled polyester microfleece. Full-color artwork can be sublimated onto the piece. Available from Boardroom Eco Apparel (asi/40705; circle 117 on Free Info Card).

## BY THE NUMBERS

# \$4.38 Billion

The amount NBC is paying for the right to broadcast the 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020 Olympics.

# \$800 MILLION

The advertising dollar haul that NBC is projecting to take in during the 2014 Winter Olympics.



BEGINNER - 100

## Headwear with Hidden Benefits

With more than 20,000 caps and hats in the promotional product industry, consider showing clients a style with a hidden benefit.

Panther Vision (asi/75825) has made its name with its LED-lighted headwear. Their caps conceal a useful lighting system in the brim. The new POWERCAP Stealth 2575 True Timber combines the LED lights with a Conceal-pattern camo that is perfect for deep-woods hunters. The high-resolution composition of bark, leaves, twigs, and limbs expand the patterns' effectiveness to provide cover in most any wooded setting.

Another option from Panther Vision is a beanie that combines the company's patent-pending Ultra Bright LED technology with a premium compression fleece hat to provide a perfect hands-free flashlight. The soft, moisture-wicking lining pulls moisture away from the head and keeps the wearer

warm and dry. Four LEDs provide more than 48 Lumens. "When you click the easy on/off switch hidden in the band, you'll notice that two of the LEDs are angled down at 55 degrees to light up where your hands are for close-up tasks, while the other two LEDs are aimed forward to light the distance up to 42 feet away," explains Chuck Freeman, director at Panther Vision. These make an excellent gift for outdoor recreation, service workers/tradesmen and child safety programs.

Children in particular will find the light-up baseball cap from ALightPromos.com (asi/34194) appealing. The entire brim is trimmed with LED edging, creat-

ing a halo-like effect around the face. It's ideal for nighttime walks or events. Heidi Swanstrom, PR/marketing manager of ALightPromos.com, says there is an even broader appeal: "We have had clients buy them for golf tournaments and baseball events, but really they appeal to anyone in the sports/outdoors industry."

Functionality goes beyond just lighting when it comes to handy headwear. For example, headwear from Madrone is meticulously designed for hot-wear comfort and rugged outdoor activities. Its Navigator hat provides an array of features, including UPF 50+ sun protection, a stowaway crown pocket and floatable brim. The featherweight FloatCore brim technology allows headwear to float in fresh and salt water making it ideal for water-related sports and activities like fishing, paddling, boating, swimming and more.



Looking for headwear with additional functionality? Consider two lighted options from Panther Vision (asi/75825; circle 113 on Free Info Card): The **camo True Timber structured cap** (PS4-167) and the **POWERCAP beanie** (CUBWB-4539), made from compression fleece.

Photos courtesy of Panther Vision (asi/75825)



This **light-up baseball cap** (11056 5DAY) with LED edging from ALightPromos.com (asi/34194; circle 114 on Free Info Card) is ideal for night-time events.

Photo courtesy of ALightPromos.com (asi/34194)



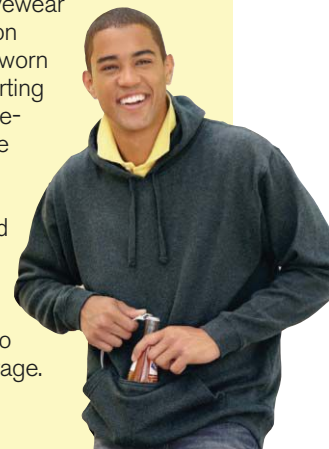
This **Madrone hat** (Navigator) from Sunday Afternoons (asi/90134; circle 107 on Free Info Card) features a FloatCore brim technology that allows it to float in fresh and salt water.

Photo courtesy of Madrone

### Apparel With Extra Action

Why source a plain hoodie when you could up the user-value with a style that has a surprise built-in function? The J America Tailgate Hooded Sweatshirt (8815) from S&S Activewear (asi/84358; circle 97 on Free Info Card) will be worn and used for every sporting event or backyard barbecue. A built-in neoprene beverage holder inside the front pouch pocket keeps a drink close and cold. A hidden metal bottle opener, also in the front pouch pocket, makes it easy to pop a top on any beverage.

Photo courtesy of S&S Activewear (asi/84358)



# Zip Up Your Zipper Knowledge

**Small but mighty** details determine whether a garment functions properly or has an embarrassing malfunction. Knowing what type of closures are on the garment you're presenting matters, particularly when it comes to zippers.

Zippers come in a variety of types. For most apparel, like pants, skirts and shorts, the common option is a *closed-end zipper*, which, as the name suggests, has a single slider that zips up in only one direction. These are non-separating. For jackets and coats, you'll encounter two other choices. *Open-end zippers* have two halves that completely disengage from each other, perfect for a jacket. *Two-way open-end zippers* also present separated ends, but have slider movement that can close from the top or bottom of the garment. This allows for a zipper to be opened near the garment's bottom but closed near the top. Long, heavy winter coats and raincoats frequently use this version.

The structure of the zipper is comprised of the slider, elements and tape. The *slider* is the moveable tab that joins or separates the elements. Think of *elements* as "teeth"; these are the parts along each side of the zipper that engage when the slider opens or closes. The *tape* is the fabric sides to which the zipper is embedded. Polyester is commonly used because of its strength and durability. The material that makes up the slider and elements really affects how a zipper looks and performs. There are metal, plastic and nylon versions. Within the metal choices you find variants from aluminum to nickel to brass.

A well-known and reputable brand of zipper is YKK. Dunbrooke (asi/50930), for example, only puts YKK's polished brass zippers in its line of workwear jackets. Not only are these zippers proven to last, they also open and close smoothly. When purchasing a garment with a zipper, examine

its parts and try it out. Be sure there is no loss of elements and that the track is straight. Are there any threads or frays of fabric that can get caught in the zipper? Once a garment is zipped does it lie flat or

hang straight? Examining and discussing these details with your client positions you as an expert and gives them a reason for investing more in long-term quality.

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# LES UCT DEF

By Chuck Zak

“I want to show you something new.” These are seven of the finest words you can tell your clients. And with 2014 upon us, you can make it happen thanks to the new items that suppliers across the industry have unveiled. We’ve arranged 27 products into nine key categories, with each and every item new for this year. For both distributors and buyers, these are products worth getting excited about.

## Corporate Perks

Maintaining an appropriately upscale appearance while staying comfortable and confident is job one for the busy professional. Suppliers are achieving that balance this year with a fresh collection brimming with classic looks and complemented by sharp new ideas.

► **Cotton/poly V-neck sweater vest** (SW286) from SanMar (asi/84863; circle 121 on Free Info Card).



► **Men's polyester printed flag necktie** from Assertive Creativity (asi/37166; circle 133 on Free Info Card).



◄ **Men's heathered crossweave cotton/poly shirt** (BG8215) with spread collar from Blue Generation (asi/40653; circle 132 on Free Info Card).



## Smart Accessorizing

Even after an outfit has been fully put together, the job isn't over. Accessories can add subtle style, crucial functionality or unmistakable individuality – often all at once. These accessories add on-trend punch and exciting technological innovations.



▼ **Foldable wayfarer sunglasses** with microfiber pouch from Glass-U (circle 130 on Free Info Card).

▼ **Leather wallet** (RFTR110 -5) with Bluetooth tracker and RFID blocker from Royce Leather (asi/52390; circle 131 on Free Info Card).



▶ **Cotton/silk blend infinity scarf** (INF-8020-055) in multiple colors from Wolfmark (asi/98085; circle 129 on Free Info Card).

## Youth Movement

Young women's apparel is always the most vibrant of niches. Confidence, dynamism and exuberant individuality are the hallmarks of these styles. They don't cling to tradition too tightly and aren't afraid of bold expression.



◀ **Ladies' French terry glitter hood** (8860) featuring glitter-knit fabric from J. America (asi/62977; circle 134 on Free Info Card).

▼ **Juniors' cotton/poly French terry zip hoodie** (8901) from Pima Apparel (asi/78820; circle 136 on Free Info Card).



◀ **Ladies' cotton Frostie tee** (W2384), each shirt unique from hand-crafted process, from MV Sport (asi/68318; circle 135 on Free Info Card).



## Splitting Layers

Advances in apparel technology have dramatically increased the amount of warmth a garment can provide. Consequently, as bulk has decreased, the intricacies of layering have given new life to cool-weather looks. These garments offer the renewed pursuit of comfort unconstrained by the necessity of cumbersome outerwear.



◀ **Ladies' micro-fleece full-zip jacket** (8498) from Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788; circle 104 on Free Info Card).

▶ **Ladies' stand-up-collar zipneck** (430122) featuring dynamic paneling at the sleeves from Boardroom ECO Apparel (asi/40705; circle 117 on Free Info Card).



◀ **Unisex mid-weight hoodie** (SA123) made with 80/20 combed ringspun cotton/polyester from Sportco (asi/88792; circle 139 on Free Info Card).

## Scholarly Pursuits

The necessities of student life demand practical ease-of-wear from apparel but without sacrificing an understated appreciation of style. School pride also requires ample space for logos and mascots – something these garments offer while holding up to the unpredictable conditions of a young and impetuous scholar's lifestyle.

▶ **Distressed cap** (51214) with hand-washed cotton visor and front panels and soft-mesh poly back from Ouray Sportswear (asi/75402; circle 138 on Free Info Card).



◀ **Tri-blend tee** (23) made from bamboo, cotton and polyester from Jerico (asi/63304; circle 137 on Free Info Card).



▶ **Wide-neck sweat-shirt** (V01G) with tunic length and kangaroo pocket from Boxercraft (asi/41325; circle 140 on Free Info Card).



## Competitive Drive

How you play the game is determined by how good you feel. Apparel with cutting-edge performance qualities helps keep athletes free from the distractions of sweat, temperature and weather. With smartly designed sportswear like this, the user is free to test the limits of human endurance while making it all look effortless.



◀ **Performance-driven soft shell** (88693/78693) with decorative overlay details from Ash City (asi/37127; circle 142 on Free Info Card).

▶ **Reversible muscle shirt** (N2349) with multiple performance properties from A4 (asi/30121; circle 141 on Free Info Card).



◀ **Polyester jersey tee** (CV20) with exceptionally fast moisture evaporation from Hanes (asi/59528; circle 143 on Free Info Card).

## Talking Trends

Various factors contribute to making a garment right for your client's brand. Perhaps hardest to quantify is the allure of "cool" – the combination of elements that make an item more than the sum of its parts. Items like these look forward while courting an audience among the stylish elite.

▶ **Sewn-braid straw hat** with inside stretch band from Philadelphia Rapid Transit (asi/77945; circle 94 on Free Info Card).



◀ **Ladies' field jacket** (9200/1) with hip-length silhouette and adjustable back strap from Burk's Bay (asi/74600; circle 144 on Free Info Card).



▶ **Fashionable fold-over style tablet tote** (2301-14) with chambray print from Leed's (asi/66887; circle 145 on Free Info Card).

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## Polo Players

Polos are integral apparel for numerous markets, whether it's sportswear, corporate casual or retail uniforms. Once the very definition of dull traditionalism, today's updated polos integrate the latest in materials technology with bolder colors and smarter, comfort-conscious design.

▼ **Men's performance polyester polo** (PING 1130) has contrast piping and UV protection technology from River's End Trading Company (asi/82588; circle 146 on Free Info Card).



▼ **Classic-fit polo** wicks and evaporates for breathable comfort from Trimark Sportswear Group (asi/66888; circle 106 on Free Info Card).



▲ **Polo made with 100% authentic Peruvian cotton** and performance polyester from Broder Bros. Co. (asi/42090; circle 119 on Free Info Card).

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## Weekend Wonders

Sophistication is sometimes mistaken for an expendable quality in promotional apparel; but with each season, the industry gains a deeper understanding of how to create exceptional styles. Items like these fit right in with the modern consumer's ideas of fun and relaxation.

▼ **Soft shirt-dress** (01908E1) made from sustainable eco-jersey from Alternative Apparel (asi/34850; circle 96 on Free Info Card).



▼ **Women's boyfriend cardigan** (LB928) with metallic elements and buttons from Tri-Mountain (asi/92125; circle 99 on Free Info Card).



▲ **Long ladies' coat** (807) that sheds rain and snow from Brandwear (asi/41545; circle 102 on Free Info Card).



APPAREL'S NE



CONTEN



# WEST

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Polyconcept built itself into one of the industry's largest suppliers. Now, the hard goods company is fighting to redefine the business of decorated apparel.

BY C.J. MITTICA

**W**as this the mountaintop? Over the span of two decades, Polyconcept North America had become one of the top five largest suppliers in the industry. Loyal distributors raved about its trio of companies – Leed's (asi/66887) and sister companies Bullet (asi/42424) and Journalbooks (asi/91340) –

for their design prowess and pain-free customer service. The Leed's SureShip model launched 15 years ago, accelerating service times everywhere into hyperdrive. Was there anything left to do?

There was, in fact, one summit left to climb. Apparel is the industry's number-one product category, the domain in which seven of the top 10 suppliers in *Counselor's* Top 40 rankings primarily trade in. Polyconcept searched for a partner – a company it hoped had more than me-too product and shared Leed's slavish devotion to design. It found what Leed's COO Sharon Willochell calls "a kindred spirit" in the form of Trimark Sportswear Group (asi/92122), one of the largest apparel suppliers in Canada.

And so in 2011, Trimark became the latest addition to Polyconcept's stable of companies. Over the span of two years, the new partnership was rolled out at a crawl to distributors, step by aching measured step. Now, Polyconcept has removed its self-imposed restrictions, and Trimark Powered by Leed's (asi/66888), as the U.S. entity is called, is offering nationwide coverage. The company is promising and delivering entirely new approaches to everything from in-house decoration to turnaround times. It clearly



has long-term designs of becoming a significant player in the apparel realm. But amid the building buzz and curiosity, an even bigger question hangs in the balance: Will Polyconcept forever change the business of promotional apparel?

### NORTH TO SOUTH

In the fall of 2011, shortly after the acquisition, three Polyconcept bigwigs met with the Trimark brain trust. Polyconcept's initial intention, according to Willochell, was to round out its portfolio with a solid apparel company who happened to have a strong footprint in Canada. Entry into the U.S. market would come somewhere down the line. But as Polyconcept got to know more about Trimark, the company changed its mind about the U.S. The meeting confirmed what everyone had come to believe: They would enter the U.S. much sooner than originally planned. "That was a really exciting meeting, actually," says Willochell, a Leed's veteran of 15 years and the newly installed president of Trimark Powered by Leed's. "We realized this could be a very powerful combination."

Trimark was no mere cipher in the deal. The Ontario-based company thrived in the last decade as one of the leading suppliers in Canada, jousting with its down-the-block rival Ash City (asi/37143) for country supremacy. "If you are a distributor in Canada, you have an Ash City and Trimark account. That's as simple as it can be said," says Neil Piitz, a respected voice in the Canadian market who founded Top 40 distributor Accolade Promotion Group (asi/102905) and previously worked at Ash City.

Even though Trimark laid its foundation in Canada, the U.S. is not foreign territory. In 2000, the supplier purchased a trio of companies and leapt into the American market. But four years later, presented with what President Will Andrew says was "an offer we couldn't refuse," Trimark divested its U.S. business to what is now River's End Trading Company (asi/82588). It was a necessary move to reinvigorate its brand and seize market share in its home country. "We really had an opportunity to take a very bold approach with the product development and be a bit more fashion-forward," says Andrew, who has been with Trimark since 2005.

The company reimaged itself as a mid- to high-end private label that excelled in design. A deal to create licensed apparel for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver and an agreement with



True Edge transfer is one of four decoration techniques offered by Trimark Powered by Leed's (asi/66888). It allows for free-standing text and can be placed where an embroidery hoop can't reach.

Photo courtesy of Trimark Powered by Leed's (asi/66888)

popular Canadian retailer Roots raised its standing in the Canadian market. All the while, the apparel company trained its eye across the border and imagined the scenario in which it would return to the U.S. Discussions with Polyconcept began in 2008, but the struggling economy dampened initial enthusiasm. Once the Olympics concluded and Trimark moved into its new facility in the early part of 2010, dialogue between the two companies began in earnest.

By partnering with Polyconcept, Trimark won an instant reputation boost with the backing to grow its inventory and cash flow. And it earned entry into a country with a population nearly 10 times the size of Canada. "Polyconcept gives them instant credibility," says Piitz, who now works with Add Impact (asi/106606) in Woodbridge, Ontario. "By coming out with a powerhouse like Polyconcept, Trimark goes into the heavyweight division instantly. Being able to leverage the relationships that Polyconcept has with its distributor base just opens so many doors for them."

On the other side, Polyconcept wanted to avoid merely marrying its service model with an apparel company and coming to market. "None of our customers really needed another apparel supplier," says Willochell. "We didn't want to just say 'Hooray, it's Leed's, and we're into apparel!' We wanted to be very careful about making sure we had a reason to be and it was something that made sense for our customers."

Ultimately, customer buy-in began with Trimark's approach to

“None of our customers really needed another apparel supplier. We didn't want to just say 'Hooray, it's Leed's, and we're into apparel!'”

— Sharon Willochell, Trimark Powered by Leed's (asi/66888)

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“By coming out with a powerhouse like Polyconcept, Trimark goes into the heavyweight division instantly.”

— Neil Piitz, Add Impact Inc. (asi/106606)

product design, which covers a range of corporate and performance options. That's what first impressed Michael Snyder, VP of merchandising for Trimark Powered by Leed's and the company's first U.S. sales rep. "I looked at this collection," says Snyder, "and said, 'If nothing else, when we come to the U.S. market, we have an outstanding apparel collection that will find its own way.'" And as the company teased out its product offering in the U.S., it won over distributors even before they put in their first order. "I thought they might come out with what everybody else is doing, and that's why I was skeptical," says Jill Albers, business development for Shumsky (asi/326300), one of the early participants in the U.S. pilot program. "But that's not what they did at all."

#### TIME TO CHANGE

Decoration is the *raison d'être* for the wearables industry, but it's also the most complicated element. Trimark Powered by Leed's trained its sights early on in-house decoration. The company is presenting four decoration techniques initially, three of which have elements that were developed exclusively by the company: Deboss, laser and True Edge transfer. The latter is something that Trimark Powered by Leed's is especially bullish about – a new means of heat transfer that allows for free-standing text and can be placed in places an embroidery hoop can't reach. Leed's had already pioneered the process for its bags, but its potential for apparel wasn't unearthed until the companies teamed up. "It's the fastest growing decoration technique we have," says Andrew. "That was truly a collaboration. I would say they were sitting on a diamond in the rough and didn't realize it because they hadn't worked on apparel."

Currently, 75% of the apparel that Trimark Powered by Leed's sells in the U.S. comes decorated – an absurdly high number for an apparel supplier. But that's only part of the equation. The company is striving for simplicity with a one-price solution for decoration and sizing. Even bigger, it is essentially bringing the Leed's shipping model to decorated apparel. New orders go out in five business days, re-orders in three. SureShip one-day shipping at no extra charge is even available with certain requirements (orders submitted by 5 p.m., one-location decoration and waiving the right to artwork approval). Trimark Powered by Leed's says that between 30% to 35%

of its decorated orders ship out as early as the next day on SureShip.

It's a major change from the typical decorated apparel order, which involves shipping to multiple locations and is often measured by the week rather than the day. And in an industry where rush service is quickly becoming standard, the potential is massive. InkHead Promotional Products (asi/231159), an online provider that is built for speed, works with Trimark Powered by Leed's and embraces the pace. "The way apparel was ordered in our industry was so antiquated, clumsy and out-of-date," says Jim Franklyn, InkHead's VP of sales and marketing. "From a productivity standpoint, it reeked for somebody to come in and do exactly what they did. You talk about low-hanging fruit."

The ripple effects will be felt in the industry. Franklyn sees several apparel suppliers who could prepare similar decoration services in short order. "The ones that do not have the volume, who do not have too much of a risk, they'll do it," he says. "And the ones who do have too much volume with decorator sub-contractors, they're the ones who will pause." Meanwhile, Albers sees larger hard good companies exploring the additions of decoration and apparel lines. "You already see lines starting to bring in hats," she says. "Hats are the gateway drug to apparel."

However, for now Polyconcept has admittedly slow-played its hand. The company erected several barriers in the U.S. over the last 18 months with Trimark Powered by Leed's. Its apparel was only available in a handful of markets; its U.S. website was hidden behind password protection; and its wares were not available on industry search engines. Polyconcept says it was necessary to gauge interest, fine-tune its processes and build inventory while determining which of Trimark's collections would sell best in the U.S. market. "It helped us to invest wisely in the proper equipment, personnel, everything," says Snyder, who has spent over 20 years in this industry. "Looking back, it was the smartest thing that we've done."

Not everything has been perfected yet. Trimark Powered by Leed's has integrated apparel experts to work in tandem with distributors' normal Leed's customer service rep; distributor clients say the set-up works well but is not completely fine-tuned. (Trimark Sportswear still handles all Canadian orders, while Leed's handles the U.S.) The company has more in the offing, including at least two additional decoration techniques that it has yet to introduce. In addition, it will be proactive about adding brand names to its collection, as it has already done with Puma, which is only available in the U.S.

With all that said, Trimark Powered by Leed's has been clear about its goal to stay focused and not become the all-encompassing apparel supplier in the way that SanMar (asi/84863) and Broder Bros. Co. (asi/42090) cast a shadow over the industry. "I think we have a place," Willochell says. "We're focused on where our product is differentiated, where our model can add value to people. But we're never going to be all things to all people."

C.J. Mittica is the editor of Wearables. Contact him at [cmittica@asicentral.com](mailto:cmittica@asicentral.com) or follow him on Twitter at @CJ\_Wearables.



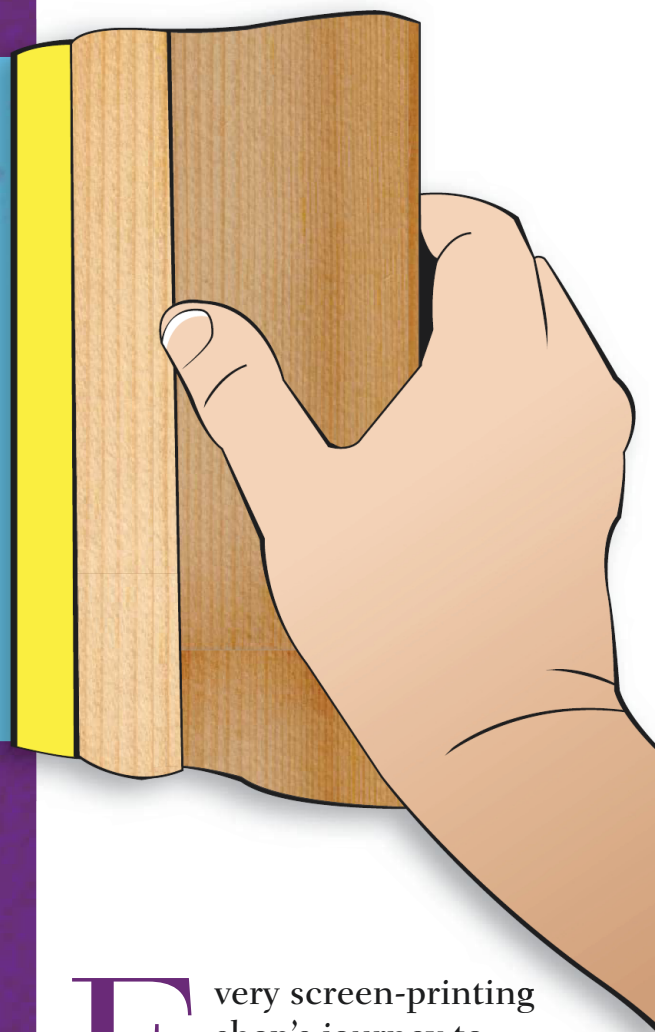
# EXPANSION

# OVERDRIVE

From quiet beginnings to constant production, your screen-printing shop can achieve tremendous growth. Our in-depth guide can help you along the way. **By Christopher Ruvo**

# SION

# RIVE



**E**very screen-printing shop's journey to success is unique. And yet, there exist key growth points that are common to many printers. Moving from a home-based operation to a larger leased space. Hiring staff. Upgrading to an automatic printer. Diversifying into other apparel decorating mediums. Each of these important progress markers comes with a particular set of considerations and challenges. To help you leap over potential pitfalls on the path to expansion, here is an in-depth guide for getting each stage of growth right.



# STEP 1

## Graduating From the Garage

**S**o the screen-printing business you've been running out of the garage or shed is starting to pick up steam. Fact is, you're outgrowing the space. To meet demand and increase sales, you're going to need more room. Where do you go from here?

### Stick Around

Depending on your cash flow and property size, you could renovate and expand the garage or shed you're working in to accommodate your operation. Going a step forward, you could consider constructing a new facility at your property. "I know of very many successful screen printers in more rural areas who have built a separate shop on their properties to build their business out of," says Ryan Moor, CEO of Ryonet (asi/528500), a supplier of screen-printing equipment and supplies. Plus, you can't beat the commute.

### Look for a Lease

If your property isn't exactly the Ponderosa Ranch, then your next most practical option is to lease. The type of space to get depends on your business. Shops geared to retail sales will want a high-visibility space that's conducive to walk-ins. Strip malls or stand-alone buildings in commercial areas along major roads or highways are possible options. If you primarily run fulfillment jobs, however, visibility isn't as much of a concern and you can look at spaces in places like industrial parks. The good news: Certain prospects will be more inclined to consider you now that you're in a "real" business space.

### Weigh the Costs

Upgrading your property will require funds for renovations or construction, but when it's all said and done, you'll own the building and will have less overhead. For leasing, you're taking on a lot more overhead – and not just rent. As Moor points out, expenses for electrical, insurance, phone and internet will likely be heftier. Then there's the

potential for double nets or triple nets – the monthly amounts you pay for the space's real estate taxes, building insurance and, in the case of the triple net, maintenance. Know your revenue and current expenses, forecast as accurately as possible your future revenue, and then analyze those things in relation to the true bottom-line costs of the unit you're considering leasing.

### Find What's in Your Power

Especially for home properties, you must ensure you have the utility capacity required to power the equipment you'll need to meet your growth targets. "A lot of industrial equipment," says Moor, "requires 3-phase power, which is often hard to get on rural or residential properties." Find out, too, if local zoning laws allow business operations in residential zones. And, if you're retail-focused, realize that walk-in business may be hampered because you're not in a more commercially visible location.

## + DO THE + MATH +

Avoid taking on overhead burden if your shop is doing **under \$50,000** by moving into a commercial or industrial space. Once revenue is between **\$50,000 to \$100,000** range, you can consider looking to move into a professional facility.



# Print Profile

## Sunday in the Garage

**Paul Caruso's mom** told him that if he cleaned out the garage behind her Los Angeles home, then he and his buddy Tim Guza could use the 400-square-foot space to launch their screen-printing business. Caruso and Guza, two printing pros rearing to open their own shop, took the deal.

Since launching Sunday Print Co. in 2007, the business partners have never looked back, riding a steady tide of rising sales to the point where they have left the garage behind and moved into a much roomier commercial space in Mid-City L.A. "Our space has given us more legitimacy," says Guza. "It's set up like a nice studio. It gives a good impression that's helped us build our business."

While the Sunday Print duo always planned to get out of the garage, the decision to shoulder the additional overhead of a commercial lease wasn't taken hastily. The partners spent years carefully managing the growth of their shop. Outstanding service and great prints fueled positive word-of-mouth and stellar reviews on Yelp, all of which helped attract new, loyal customers.

As the seams on the garage operation stretched, the Sunday crew started eyeing potential commercial spaces. Finally, Sunday reached a point where it simply needed more room to meet the needs of clients and eager prospects. Thanks to the pre-emptive space scouting and savvy number-crunching to know what they could afford, Guza and Caruso had a spot in mind that would just about fit the shop's budget. The space was in a good building, at a reasonable commute and large enough to allow for future expansion without being too big – the latter point being especially crucial for Sunday. After negotiating with the landlord to reduce the monthly rent, Sunday moved into its new digs.

Now able to accommodate higher-volume jobs and more production-friendly equipment (a bigger conveyer dryer and flash unit, for example), the L.A. shop has continued to grow, cranking out orders on two manuals – an original four-color and a six-color that was later added. Business has been so good that Caruso and Guza recently hired their first employee. "Our next goal," says Guza, "is to buy an automatic press."



Tim Guza

## What You Want In Your New Space

- 1** Room to accommodate your current equipment and new equipment additions that you may add in the next few years.
- 2** Breathing space for an administrative or office section.
- 3** If clients and prospects will be stopping by, then at least a small area – call it a showroom – to display your top works.
- 4** A professional-grade darkroom and quality washout sink and filtration system. "No more rinsing screens out in the bath or out the back door," says Ryan Moor, CEO of Ryonet (asi/528500). "You need something to filter out the emulsion and ink chunks from going down the drain."

## Filtration System



In your newly expanded shop space, you'll need a legitimate filtration system like the CCI Stainless Steel Filtration System SFS100, which is designed to filter the waste water that drains out of your washout booth and prevent drain clogging. Available from Ryonet (asi/528500; circle 126 on Free Info Card).



## STEP 2 Now Hiring

**Y**ou're an entrepreneur. You like your independence, doing things yourself. But if your shop is growing and you want to continue the sales upswing, there will come a point where you have to hire an employee to keep up.

### Make Sure it's the Right Time

Are you experiencing a temporary sales surge, or is there enough evidence to indicate that the success is sustainable and able to be built upon? "If it's at the point that you just can't handle the workload and you can't offer the level of service customers deserve, then it's time to hire," says Tyler Dummett, president of Workhorse Products, a manufacturer of screen-printing machines.

### Cover the Bases

Read up on the Occupational Safety & Health Administration's workplace safety standards. Also get versed in local and state regulations. Failure to meet these could lead to fines and other repercussions. Also, be prepared to provide things like safety glasses and eye wash stations – and to have posters displayed that address emergency procedures and workplace regulat-

### Use Personality Tests

A 2011 survey by the Society for Human Resource Management shows that nearly 20% of employers use personality tests. Evaluating a person's attitude, emotional adjustment, interests and interpersonal skills, these tests can help determine if a job candidate will prove a quality hire for your shop. Many tests are available, but the most popular include "The Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire," "Caliper Profile," "California Psychological Inventory" and "Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, Conscientiousness (DISC)." The

DISC Assessment, for example, assesses the behavior of individuals in certain situations and groups behavior into four major personality styles. Meanwhile, the Caliper measures 25 personality traits related to job performance. Be aware, however, that critics say personality tests unfairly disqualify some candidates.

### Give it a Trial Run

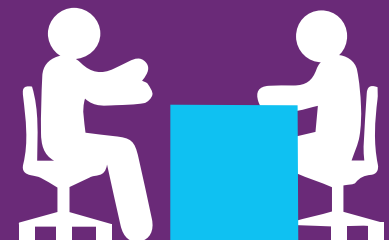
Sometimes, it's advantageous to bring someone on for a part-time, temporary or probationary period before making him or her a full-fledged employee. Not only will you get a real feel for the value they may (or may not) add, you'll gain important managerial experience.

### Provide Support & Guidance

Once you've invested in someone, help them succeed by providing training on the skills, knowledge and processes they'll need to master their specific duties at your particular shop. Provide progress reports and constructive instruction to help the hire surmount the new-job hurdles.

## + DO THE + MATH +

Generally, a reliable employee with printing experience who can expertly operate a manual screen printing press earns an hourly wage of **\$14 to \$18** an hour. A quality employee hired to operate an automatic press typically receives between **\$10 and \$14** an hour. The cost of an employee (including ancillary costs like insurance) should be covered by the revenue boost from added productivity.



## Print Profile

# Making a Good Impression



**Marshall Atkinson**

**With 25 years** of experience in the screen printing industry, Marshall Atkinson has hired hundreds of people. Sure, the chief operating officer at Visual Impressions seeks job hunters with industry background, especially if

he is hiring a skill position like a screen printer. But just as important, Atkinson is keen to connect with candidates who have quality character. "I'm looking for genuine people with a good attitude – people who fit our culture," says Atkinson, who oversees approximately 85 employees in a 100,000 square-foot facility in Milwaukee. "You want somebody who can learn and grow – who, in a year, will be able to do more difficult tasks."

To find the right person, Atkinson starts with a phone conversation during which preliminaries like pay, job responsibilities and the candidate's background are discussed. If he gets a positive impression, the job seeker is invited to an in-person interview during which Atkinson asks a range of in-depth questions. "I'm looking to see if they're engaged, if they're responding with honest answers, what their body language is like," says Atkinson.

If the discussion goes well, he leads the candidate on a tour of the sprawling facility. As he explains about different departments, Atkinson walks briskly, checking to see if the

candidate matches the pace, which can be a telltale indicator of work ethic. "You want to hire the people who hustle and ask lots of good questions," Atkinson says. If he is recruiting a skilled position, like a printer, he has the candidate run a small job.

While no interview process is foolproof, Atkinson's approach has consistently net-

“You want somebody who can learn and grow – who, in a year, will be able to do more difficult tasks.”

— Marshall Atkinson, Visual Impressions

ted outstanding employees. Recently, a woman with no prior experience aced her interviews and was brought on as a seasonal worker. Once in the shop, she started tackling tasks with ease. Visual Impressions retained her full-time and has since cross-trained her to work in multiple departments. Says Atkinson: "She has an incredible attitude and willingness to learn."

## Two Considerations

- As you hire employees, the pressures of dealing with taxes, payroll, unemployment insurance and workers compensation will mount. Consider outsourcing the handling of such things to a payroll/human resources company. "You would spend \$2 to \$3 a day to ensure your paperwork is in order," says Moor.

- When human capital needs to grow, consider using interns, freelancers and seasonal workers where possible, as long as doing so doesn't impact service levels. "You can do a lot with different people to bridge the gaps in your needs without necessarily hiring another full-timer," says Marshall Atkinson, chief operating officer at Visual Impressions.

## Spot Cleaning Gun and Station



With extra hands around the shop, there will be more handling of shirts – and more chances for ink contamination. Remove any small smudges or errors with a spot cleaning gun and station, available from Ryonet (asi/528500; circle 126 on Free Info Card)



## STEP 3 An Automatic Choice

**C**an you barely keep up with soaring sales? Maybe you're even turning away orders because you don't have the production capacity to meet demand. Are you working especially long hours and feeling the physical strain of operating your manual? If any of these symptoms sound familiar, an automatic press could be the cure.

### Look to the Future

A potential mistake for some printers is buying a press to meet current demand only. How do you see your business evolving over the next three to five years? Do you expect to be doing much greater volumes? Are you looking to venture into complex designs, incorporating more colors and the ability to create larger images, for example? Answer

questions like these, and if it's financially feasible, invest in the press that will accommodate your growth objectives.

### Know Your Space Limitations

Learn the exact dimensions of the press you're considering buying. Do you have enough space for it? If not, could you find a smaller model that still empowers you to achieve your aims?

### Budget for the Additional Expense

Automatic presses cost \$20,000 to a few hundred thousand dollars. While you can invest in an entry to mid-level automatic for \$20,000 to \$30,000, your initial expense layout could be more than that. Depending on what you currently have in shop, you may be compelled to purchase additional equipment to optimize the production capacity of the auto. In addition to automatic press screens, your equipment investments may include a larger dryer, faster flash dryers, an air compressor and a higher-end exposure system. "Most users who successfully automate

for the future spend between \$50,000 to \$100,000 on their first upgrade," says Moor.

### Exercise Due Diligence

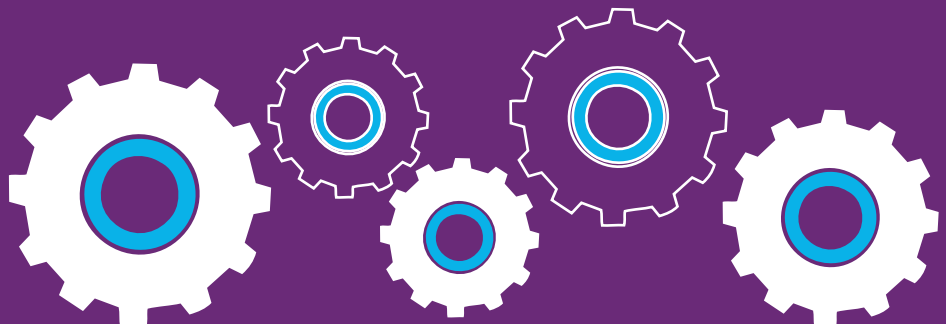
Evaluate comparable presses on a level playing field. The baseline price on one option in the range of models you're interested in may be less than another. Still, you could have to pay extra for certain key features on the lower-priced press that come standard on the pricier competitor. Find out before investing.

### Learn about the Manufacturer or Equipment Distributor

Look to buy from a press provider that offers quality training and great ongoing technical support. Learn, too, how deep the company's inventory of replacement parts is and how close its nearest service techs are to you – sometimes emergencies necessitate immediate access to them.

## + DO THE + MATH +

Many screen printers buy used equipment first, saving 30-50%, but be careful that the machine is mechanically sound. You can pay a tech to make sure a used press is in good condition. Also, buy from reputable resellers.



## Print Profile

# The Auto Zone



Deanna Smith  
& Josh Love

**N The Zone Ink** (asi/528603) was growing by leaps and bounds. As the orders flowed in, the Bend, OR-based shop needed a new edge to keep pace and to optimize the opportunities it saw opening up. After much research, co-owner Josh Love determined that investing in an automatic screen printing press – a sRoque YOU from Ryonet (asi/528500) – would help get the business to the next level while providing the greatest return on investment.

It's a decision he would make again in a heartbeat.

Since buying the sRoque a little more than a year ago, the automatic has helped N The Zone do everything from reduce labor costs to expand sales by performing jobs that would have been implausible on the old manual.

For example, N The Zone has substantially increased business with a local parks and recreation organization. In the past, doing the high-volume orders the organization seeks would have bogged down operations at the three-person shop for a week; now such orders can be finished in a day or less. The efficiency of the automatic press enables N The Zone to turn a decent profit while offering highly competitive pricing to this cost-conscious customer – something that was infeasible with

the manual. “The new press,” says co-owner Deanna Smith, “has completely changed the game for us.”

Indeed, N The Zone can also fulfill more last-minute orders, as well as create larger prints. “With as busy as we are now,” says Love, “we would be turning jobs away if we were still printing manually.”

“We wouldn't have been able to go after those types of jobs without an automatic.”

— Josh Love, N The Zone Ink

The sRoque has empowered N The Zone to reduce labor overhead from two employees to one. (An extra employee was needed before to keep the manual press running for an extra shift.) Plus, the auto's performance allows the shop to devote additional attention to customer service. “I have more time for fielding calls,” says Love, noting that fast set-up times, electric print heads and dedicated support from equipment vendors were among the key things he looked for when shopping for a press.

Eager to increase sales, N The Zone is planning to pursue business from upcoming race events that call for the printing of several thousand shirts per order. Says Love, “We wouldn't have been able to go after those types of jobs without an automatic.”

## Why Go Auto?

Tyler Dummett, president of Workhorse Products, can give you a few good reasons.

**Productivity:** “With an auto, you get two to three times the output per hour compared to a manual – and that's a conservative estimate.”

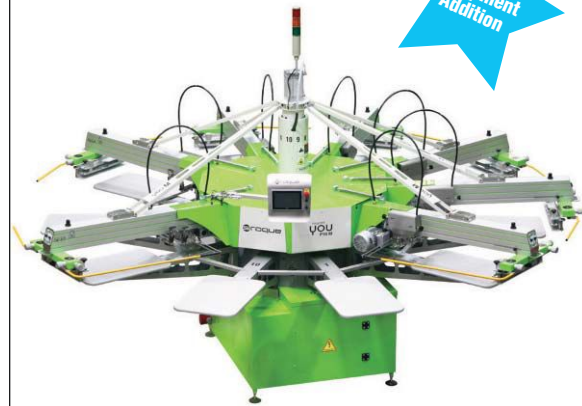
**Shorter Lead Times:** “Your turnaround will be faster and you can fit in more jobs.”

**Increased Quality:** “Your prints will be more consistent.”

**Enhanced Graphic Capabilities:** “A good automatic opens the door to new printing techniques like simulated process, gloss and density printing.”

## Automatic Screen Printing Press

Equipment Addition



Up your capacity with the sRoque YOU automatic screen printing press from Ryonet (asi/528500; circle 126 on Free Info Card.) It combines high performance technology and a durable and dependable structure for an advanced entry level automatic press.



# STEP 4

## Onward and Upward

**A**s business grows, it may become necessary to move into a larger shop space and invest in additional presses to keep current clients happy and propel continued sales gains. Don't take these steps lightly.

### Maximize Your Current Space

Before taking on the additional overhead of a bigger unit for your business, make sure you're truly getting the most out of your current facility. Start by assessing the logistics of your shop. Are things organized to ensure orders can move from receiving through to shipping as swiftly as possible? Similarly, review whether or not moving a few pieces of equipment around or being more tidy in how supplies are organized can free up space that will help you optimize the building you are already in.

### Make Two Moves in One

"A lot of growing businesses make a move that accommodates their needs this year, but fail to think about what they will need in three to five years," says Moor. "Moving automated equipment can be extremely expensive, so try to think of moving to a space now that allows you to grow and expand. Envision yourself moving two times at once." You may even want to get more space than you need now and sublease part of it to a partner or friend. "A lot of times doubling your space doesn't mean double the rent, and if you know anyone that needs a little space or storage, it may allow you to supplement your rent until you are ready to move in," Moor says. He knows from personal experience: "I was told this twice as we moved our business and I didn't listen twice. Both times we ran out of space and needed to move or add a second building much sooner than expected."

### Be Ambitious, but Don't Overextend

While you want a shop space that gives you room to grow, don't tie yourself to a facility you can't afford. Know the overhead expenses you can handle based on your current revenue and realistic sales projections. "It's really important not to underestimate your overhead," says Dummett. "You don't want to take a profitable business and turn it into an unprofitable business because your expenses increased dramatically."

### Keep an Eye on Utilities

As you did when you moved into your first commercial space, make sure the utility capacity of potential new facilities can meet your needs. For instance, if you have a gas-powered conveyor dryer, ensure the building you're considering moving into can accommodate a gas line. "You want a building that can handle your electric, gas and plumbing now and in the years ahead," says Dummett.

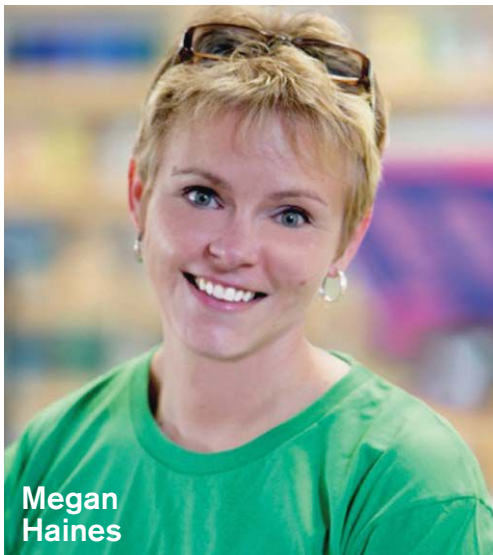
## + DO THE + MATH +

When considering a move to a bigger space, pay close attention to what percentage of your revenue will go to rent. Ideally, you'd like rent to constitute **10%** or less than your projected gross revenues. So, for instance, if your shop's annual revenue is **\$1 million**, you'd like to pay no more than **\$100,000** over the course of the year. On average, a shop earning \$1 million brings in **\$83,333** per month, meaning a desired monthly payment would be **\$6,944** or less.



# Print Profile

## Expansion 'Ink'ling



Megan Haines

When Megan Haines launched MiddletownInk (*asi/700787*) in 2008, the screen-printing shop operated with one four-color manual press in a 1,200 square-foot industrial space across the street from a junkyard. Today, Haines' fast-growing company has two automatics and two manuals cranking out 15,000 printed pieces per week. While the automatics handle high-volume work, the company's Vastex V-2000 four-color manual serves as a specialty press to handle everything from earmuffs to plumbing valve sleeves. An infrared flash cure unit dries items between stations and saves them 20 seconds per item.

The company does it all in a 5,000 square-foot facility that was customized specifically for MiddletownInk's needs. "It's a great space to grow in over the next several years," says Haines. And she's likely to need the room: Business at MiddletownInk surged 250% year-over-year through the first 10 months of 2013, and there's no sign of things slowing down.

For Haines, grassroots networking, positive word-of-mouth and a near-maniacal devo-

tion to quality and customer service helped drive rapid growth. By 2009, she simply required a larger shop, so she leased another 1,200-square-foot unit in the same facility as her initial space. The situation wasn't ideal, though, and it soon became evident that MiddletownInk would again need a larger venue to meet clients' needs.

Still, Haines wasn't hasty. To ensure she could handle the increase in overhead costs, Haines rigorously analyzed her business through a 14-month span. "I wanted to see my gross sales up and my expenses maintained or coming down," she says. "I also wanted to make sure we were as efficient as possible."

Additionally, Haines performed extensive research about new potential expenses, including things like utility costs. Number-crunching and operational review made it clear that MiddletownInk was ready for a facility upgrade. Haines hashed out whether she wanted to move into a retail-style space or another industrial unit, ultimately opting for the latter with a just-constructed building. She didn't merely move in though; she worked with the landlord to have the unit tailor-fitted to her needs. "Moving to a bigger place is a tough decision," she says. "You have to really look at your numbers and make sure it's the right thing to do."

Same goes for equipment investments, says Haines. Before buying, she pores over data about current job times and the projected efficiency gains and expected return on investment a press or other piece of equipment may provide. That's what persuaded Haines to incorporate a Vastex DiGiT numbering system add-on for the company's manual press. The company got lots of requests before for numbered athletic uniforms, but the work wasn't profitable. "If we can get more done faster and be profitable," she says, "then it's a go."

## Auto 2.0

So you think it's time to buy another automatic press? Before investing, review your shop setup to be sure it's running at least at 90% capacity. Look at your ...

### Pre-Press Processes

Be sure your art, film output and screen-making darkroom are producing screens efficiently. "This is where most of the time is spent in the job, so ensure that you have good systems and equipment in these areas," says Ryan Moor, CEO of Ryonet (*asi/528500*)

### Press-Time Operations

Are you and/or the printers you have running your press working as efficiently as possible? Do you understand the machine well enough to get the most out of it? If an analysis returns a "no" to either of these questions, rectify that situation before getting another press.

### Post-Press Procedures

Be certain you've unclogged any blockages that prevent you from quickly breaking down and cleaning up after a job. "When you're doing everything you can and your first automatic can't handle what you need it to, then it's time to invest," says Tyler Dummett, president of Workhorse Products.

## High-Volume Production Automatic Press



The 12-color Falcon from Workhorse Products (circle 127 on Free Info Card) is a high-volume production automatic press that delivers fast change-over speed and the ability to perform larger prints. Consider it as you expand your shop's automatic production capability.



# STEP 5

## The Diversified Decorator

In a world of box stores and soaring ecommerce sales, consumers increasingly demand convenience – one-stop shopping. To meet the need, many screen printers are bolstering their in-house offerings by providing more advanced screen-printing techniques and additional decorating mediums, including embroidery, direct-to-garment digital printing and more. Create unique multi-media designs, and become an indispensable partner to your clients.

### Talk to Current Clients

A great way to gauge whether you should diversify – and to see which decorating medium might be best for you to add – is

to chat with current customers about their needs. If, for example, customers consistently say they'd like to be able to buy their screen printing and embroidery in one place, then consider adding stitching machines.

### Know Your Needs and Research the Costs

Do you want the new decoration method you offer to be a small-scale, niche add-on service, or do you aim to build a high-volume channel of new business? Making such determinations will dictate your level of investment. Regardless, crunch the numbers and know how much cash you'll have to generate monthly from your new offerings to at least pay for the investment you've made in equipment, supplies and, if applicable, personnel.

### Embrace Specialty Inks

Diversifying your shop doesn't have to mean adding a new decoration method. It may be worth investing in specialty

inks that provide a greater range of print styles. Experiment with reflective inks with light-reflecting microspheres, high-density inks that create eye-catching 3D designs, phthalate-free water-based inks that produce prints with a super-soft hand and inks with puffing agents that cause prints to rise boldly from the garment. The best part is that most will work with the equipment you already have.

### Be Prepared to Market

For your new service to be a success, you need to let customers know about it. Consider undertaking an e-mail marketing campaign to current clients, sending samples to and/or personally calling key customers. You can even have an open-house for target buyers to check out your new capability. Make sure your website has information (images required) on the fresh medium you offer. Post about it on your social media sites. Additionally, provide clients incentives for using your new service and referring prospects to you.

## + DO THE + MATH +

Embroidery machines can cost anywhere from **under \$10,000** to **\$110,000**. Direct-to-garment printers start at **\$12,000** and reach **\$50,000** for introductory models and start-up costs. DTG printers should include pretreatment. Buying pretreatment separately can be cheaper, but the extra steps will hamper productivity and cost more money in the long run.



# Print Profile

## Embracing New Directions

**When New Directions** (asi/282560) began back in 1982, the Sacramento-based shop specialized in screen printing. But over the years, Owner Ray Wise has substantially diversified the company's offerings, first adding embroidery before later venturing into everything from direct-to-garment printing and rhinestone/stud embellishment to vinyl banners, decals, signs and more. All provided in-house, New Directions is a truly one-stop shop, which has helped the company capitalize on the full sales potential of an array of clients.

For New Directions, the decision to diversify has always been prompted by customer demand. "When we'd see a strong trend of clients consistently asking for something and it was clear we had the customer base to support it, then we would invest in the equipment to supply that service," says Wise. "We never went out on a limb; we were always confident the new machines would be busy."

And so they have been. Business was up year-over-year in 2013. To help drive such growth, New Directions features a first-class showroom in which the many mediums it provides are presented. After a look around the showroom, it's not uncommon for a customer who stopped by for screen-printed T-shirts to also invest in anything from banners to

embroidered hoodies. "Once they come in," says Wise, "they see the possibilities."

New Directions actively markets its wide-ranging capabilities through mailers, digital and print advertising, and directly to clients for which the shop is in the midst of performing a job. Recently, for example, New Directions was working on an order of T-shirts and sweatshirts for a mom-and-pop paint shop. Not only did New Directions' art department create mock-ups for the apparel, it also showcased how the paint company's graphics would look on signs and other products. "They ended up ordering yard signs and magnets and now they're back again for embroidered jackets," says Wise. "Things like that happen because we have a lot under one roof and take the time to present different ideas."

“We were always confident the new machines would be busy.”

— Ray Wise



## Top Options

### Direct-To-Garment Digital Printing:

This medium is an excellent complement to screen printing. With DTG, printers can jump into the growing personalization market and offer low-volume runs of elaborate, multi-color prints at much more affordable prices than would be possible with screen printing on comparably sized and colored orders.

**Basic Needs:** DTG printer and a heat press or garment dryer to cure post-printing.

### Sublimation Printing:

Use a sublimation printer to create full-color, all-over prints on polyester apparel and accessories and polymer-based hard goods. With sublimation, a chemical process fuses virtually fade-proof prints into the fabric.

**Basic Needs:** Sublimation printer and heat press.

**Embroidery:** If your clients are buying printed T-shirts, chances are they may also need embroidered polos, jackets, hats, fleeces and other products.

**Basic Needs:** At least one single-head, commercial-grade embroidery machine. If looking for medium to high volume, invest in at least one bigger, multi-head embroidery machine. If creating/modifying embroidery designs in-house, digitizing software – and training for the art department – is a must.

## Digital Inkjet Direct-to-Garment Printer



The Kornit's Storm II is a dual-pallet industrial digital inkjet direct-to-garment printer from Hirsch International (asi/14982; circle 128 on Free Info Card). It's designed to meet high-production demands and can serve as a perfect complement for shops that deal primarily in screen printing.



## HOW TO...

**HOLD  
THOSE  
DOTS**

**CREATE A  
DIGITAL  
MOCK-UP**

**SELECT  
THE RIGHT  
MESH**

**PRINT AN  
ALL-OVER  
DESIGN**

Puzzled by some of the most persistent challenges in screen printing? Here are the key steps to solving them.

BY SCOTT FRESENER, TONIA KIMBROUGH AND THOMAS TRIMINGHAM

## LEARN IT LIVE

Learn the intricacies of heat transfers and how to work a heat press by attending "Hands-On Workshop: Decorate on Demand With Heat Printing" at The ASI Show Dallas (Tuesday, February 4, 1:30 p.m.).

# Hold Those Dots!

This article is like a broken record. But the reason I write so often about halftone dots is because I am constantly reminded how confusing it can be to a newcomer *and* a seasoned professional.

I do color separations all day long for a living (among other things). I have two types of accounts. My best accounts are established printers who know how to "hold the dots." That is, the secret to good high-end CMYK and simulated process prints is to hold small halftone dots on screens. It requires a decent film-output system where the small halftone dots are crisp and solid enough to burn a good screen. Also, they use good screen-making techniques to have those dots get exposed properly on the screen.

My problem accounts are printers who are either new or have been printing spot color but never halftones. They struggle with holding small dots on screens and they often get bad advice from suppliers (like using capillary film, increase exposure times, etc., but that's another story).

If you are doing high-end printing, or any printing with gradations, this next piece of advice is critical: If you don't hold all the small halftone dots on the screen, your prints will look washed-out or your gradations will have a hard break where they stop.

Most often, the problem dots are the small ones. Look at this close up of printed halftones (Figure 1). It is pretty easy to get dots in the range of 40% or higher to expose on a screen. It is the smaller dots below 20% that are hardest to hold.

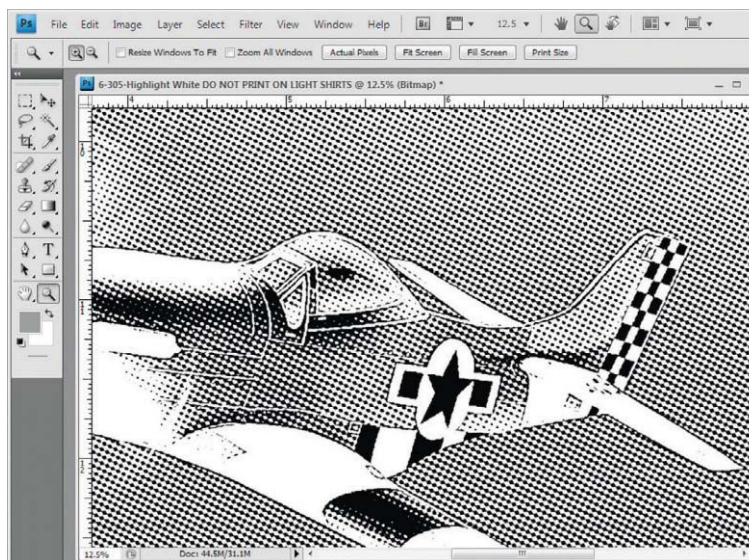
I lost count years ago how many times I have asked a customer to compare the film to the print on the shirt and tell me if they

see all the dots on the film on the final print. To me, it's an easy way to troubleshoot the problem, but maybe it's too obvious.

Here are six key factors to hold halftone dots on screens and on the shirt.

Scott Fresener is the director of T-Biz Net-

work International and the co-author of *How to Print T-shirts for Fun and Profit*. He has been in the industry since 1970, producing dozens of video and DVD training programs. He has also created automated separation programs called T-Septs and FastFilms.



◀ Holding the dots is the key to good high-end prints. This close-up shows the halftone dots that go in CMYK and simulated process prints.

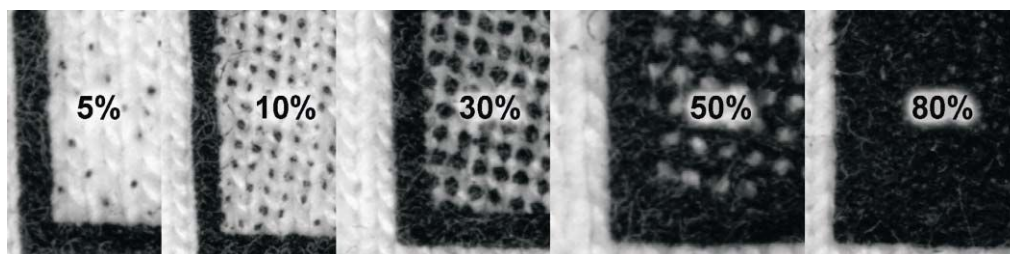


Figure 1

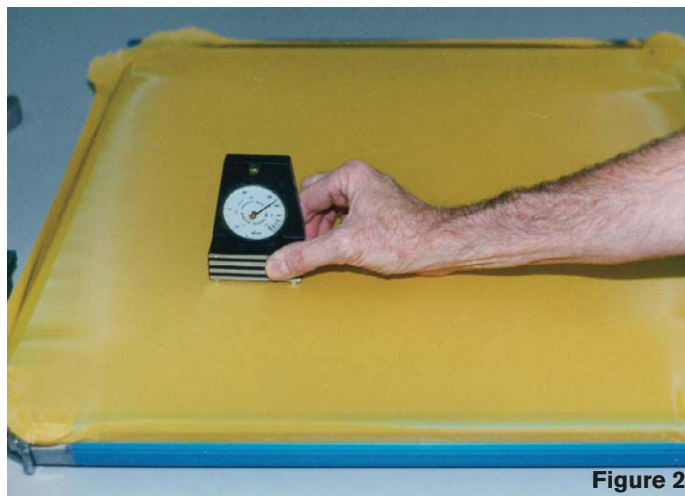


Figure 2

**Tight Screens:** This is a given, but you need tight screens to have a clean print. If you hold the dots on the screen but then make them grow twice their size with loose mesh, then you haven't really held the dots. The idea is to print the dot the size it is on the film. Yes, you will get up to 30% or 40% dot gain, but make it too loose and that 50% dot will become solid when you print it. Use a tension meter to make sure your screens are tight (Figure 2).



**Good Films:** You need to hold the dot on the film or output. If you are using vellum paper or frosted acetate on a laser printer to print halftones, those dots are pretty weak. You will be able to easily hold solid areas, but when it comes to small 5% dots, the toner deposit is so weak that your exposure light burns right through it. If you must use a laser printer, change the halftone frequency (LPI) to 45 to make the dots a little bigger and use one of the standard “toner darkener” sprays on the market.

The norm for most shops now is inkjet output. With the proper inkjet film that has an inkjet ink-receptive coating on it – and good RIP (raster image processor) software to help improve the density of the dot – you should be able to hold down to 5% or even lower and have the dot be very dark. Consider the Epson Artisan 1430 Inkjet printer (Figure 3), which is used by the vast majority of screen printers.



Figure 3

**Proper Emulsion Use:** You should be using a direct emulsion for your screens and, frankly, the two-part dual-cure emulsions (Figure 4) are more forgiving and have good resolution. They're great at holding halftone dots!

You should use a standard scoop-coater and use the sharp edge (some coaters have a round edge and sharp edge). Keep the coating fairly thin. We are not necessarily looking for a thick print. I would coat the screen one time on the inside, one time on the outside (underside) and then one more coat on the inside.



Figure 4

**Short Exposure Times:** Keep your exposure time low. Typically when using halftone dots, you should be on a higher mesh. For simple gradations, you could be on a 156, but go higher if you can. For simulated process or CMYK printing, you should be on 230 to 305 mesh. You can expose a 305 mesh for a lot shorter time than a 156. You have to simply be bold and brave – and try very short times to hold those dots! Your supplier should have an exposure calculator that will help you determine the correct exposure time for each mesh. And you can also make an exposure film (Figure 5) to do test exposures with.

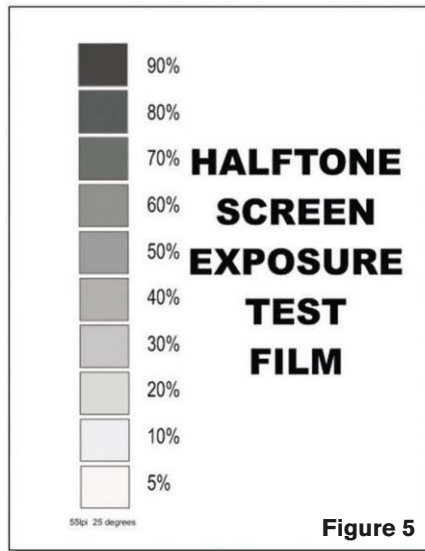


Figure 5

**Proper Press Setup:** Holding a dot also means not killing the dot when you print it. As stated before, you don't want the dot to grow more than the standard 30% to 40%. That means not only tight screens, but also good press setup. The off-contact should be very low – no more than 1/8" (Figure 6). The screens and palettes should be flat and level to each other. Printing slightly off-contact allows the screen to lay the dot cleanly on the shirt.

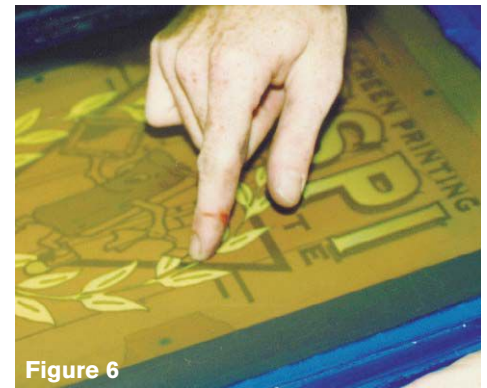


Figure 6

**Good Printing Technique:** You should use a sharp squeegee in the 70/90/70 durometer range (triple durometer) and it should only take one good clean print stroke to print the halftones (Figure 7). More strokes might be necessary but the dots will start to grow with each stroke. For example, you have a 10% halftone on the red screen to make a pink flesh color on a person's face. More strokes make the 10% grow to 20% or 30%, and guess what? Now the person looks sunburned.



Figure 7

In summary, if you use a properly tensioned screen, have good film output, use a direct emulsion with proper exposure and print the job using good printing techniques, you will hold those dots and have a much better print that doesn't look washed out. I can't say it enough – *hold those dots!*

# Create a Digital Mock-Up

Screen printers are continually asked: “When can I see what this will look like?” Customers generally want to see a digital mock-up of their artwork before they will commit to an order, even on simple one-color jobs. This means you have to find ways to create digital comps faster, and in the least expensive and time-intensive method possible.

There are some cheap art services where you can send artwork to be recreated, but there is usually a turnaround time, often 24 to 48 hours. More troubling is if there is a misunderstanding (which can happen with artwork done overseas), a revision or rework can cause the whole process to be repeated again. This is also not a great solution for those clients that want to see the digital layout of the design before the order is placed – you will have incurred a cost without a guarantee the client will place an actual order.

A simple solution is to bring the process in-house. Digital comps can be created from customer art files, even with poor resolution. Graphic design software is needed in order to do complete this process effectively. The best software solutions for quick digital mockups are Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, or CorelDRAW if you have a PC. (Adobe will run on Mac or PC, while CorelDRAW is just for PC.)

Creating a digital mockup for approval with CorelDRAW can use one of two methods, depending on the quality of the artwork. To quickly edit a file in CorelDRAW for a mock-up, follow these steps.

*Thomas Trimmingham is a contributing writer for Wearables.*



Figure 1

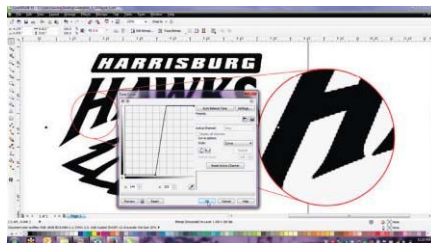


Figure 2

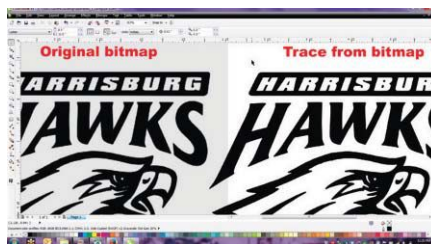


Figure 3



Figure 4

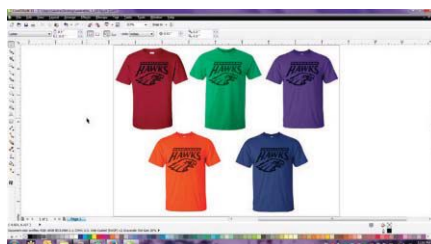


Figure 5

**Import Artwork:** Open CorelDRAW and then import your artwork from your download bin (or wherever you saved it on your computer). When you import the file use the zoom tool (magnifying glass icon) to look at the designs edges (see Figure 1).

**Quality Check:** If the quality looks really jagged or pixelated then you can attempt to average it at this point by selecting it and converting it to a bitmap (bitmaps/convert to bitmap/grayscale 300dpi). Once you have averaged the pixels in the design, it may look a little better, but still kind of fuzzy.

**Sharpen It:** At this point you can attempt to sharpen it using the tone curve dialog box under the Effects menu (Effects/Adjust/Tone curve). Once the tone curve dialog box is opened push the white point and black point of the curve towards each other to cut out any background fuzziness and force the image to be higher contrast (see Figure 2.)

**Quick Trace:** This may clean up the edge quality enough so you can use the powerful trace program inside of CorelDRAW. It's always good practice to save your file before running a complicated action on a graphic, so save it first, then select the Trace Bitmap button or command and use the Quick Trace option. It may give you a warning that your bitmap is too large and it has to reduce it, which is not a problem – just let the software reduce your bitmap automatically. Zoom back out after the trace is done to see if the resulting image is clean enough for a digital mock-up (see Figure 3).

**Create the Mock-Up:** If your image is good enough, go ahead and mock it up using the pieces that you need by changing the size of the image, deleting any unnecessary parts, then placing it on top of the shirt graphic that you want to use (see Figure 4).

**Have A Back-Up Plan:** Sometimes the graphic will not be good enough using the trace method, but don't give up. You can take a short cut at this point and still give the client something to look at. Just delete the trace portion and then select the bitmap underneath and convert it to a black and white bitmap (Bitmap/Mode/Black and White). The resulting bitmap can then be used for a one-color mock up by selecting no fill for the background and using a specific print color as the outline (see Figure 5). It may still look a little rough on the garment, but it's easier to explain with a visual reference that the final artwork will be cleaned up.



# Select the Right Mesh

**Y**ou can have awesome artwork, an ideal garment for screen printing and top-quality ink, but all is for naught if you choose the wrong mesh for the job.

So why does mesh count matter? It affects how the ink flows through the screen and determines how thickly the ink is applied and how much ink is consumed by the job. A smaller mesh count (a lower number like 38) means larger openings in the mesh, therefore ink flows more readily through the screen. In contrast, a bigger mesh count (a higher number like 280) means smaller openings allowing for finer detail in a design and less ink coverage. For this reason, screen-printing expert Chuck Maulsby, who handles sales for Graphic Solutions Group, emphasizes that every job should begin with a clear understanding of the artwork to be used. Without understanding what is required for the artwork, you cannot adequately choose the right mesh.

For example, reproducing a halftone with fine detail requires a higher-count mesh than a simple spot-color logo does. “You must know what the line count of the halftone is before you select your mesh,” Maulsby says. “If you’re not sure, it’s really hard to identify what mesh will work best for you.

“The wrong mesh will cause moiré, or will not give a true reproduction of the art. We found out over the years that the halftone dot of 45 to 50 lines per inch (LPI) works very well with garment printing.” His rule of thumb for selecting a mesh based on the halftone LPI is to use a minimum 156 mesh count for a 32-line halftone, then increase from there. The finer the mesh is, the greater your ability to successfully print fine detail. Keep in mind the most frequently used mesh counts in screen printing are 110 and 156; this provides a touchstone by which you can judge an appropriate mesh count for your job.

When selecting the right mesh for a job, Ryan Moor, president/CEO of Ryonet (528500), advises screen printers to consider



▲ Both of these were printed on 230 mesh. The left features Meteor White from Ryonet (asi/528500), a triple-blended cotton-white ink designed to print through high mesh; the right, a standard low-bleed white ink. If you plan to use higher mesh for fine detail, use a high-performing ink designed for finer mesh counts.

Photo courtesy of Ryonet Corp (asi/528500)

five factors:

1. **Deposit of Ink Needed:** Lower mesh deposits more ink.
2. **Density/Viscosity of Ink:** Use lower mesh for denser/thicker inks and higher mesh for thinner inks.

3. **Detail:** Higher detail equals higher mesh.

4. **Hand or Feel:** The hand or feel of the job is mostly determined by mesh. The higher the mesh, the softer hand or feel.

5. **Ease of Printing:** For thicker inks, lower mesh will be easier to print even though a slightly higher mesh may give a better result and saves the printer money.

Of course there are always other issues that can sway your decision. “Manual printers often choose (and I would recommend they stick with) lower mesh for thicker inks,” Moor says. “On the flip side, high mesh can actually print easier for certain types of jobs. Since there is less ink transfer, it is easier to control the ink flow and print wet on wet when using higher mesh. This is especially applicable for light-colored garments.”

Also look at the type of mesh that is being used. Maulsby recommends using dyed yellow mesh because it yields a truer image when defined edges and crisp detail are needed. Why? Dyed mesh prevents light refraction, which can cause loss of detail. Undyed mesh still works fine for spot color. *Tonia Kimbrough is a contributing writer for Wearables.*

## NUMBERS GAME

Follow this chart, courtesy of Ryonet Corp (asi/528500), to help you choose the right mesh.

MESH SIZE	INK	PRINTS AND GARMENTS
12, 24	Thick metallic inks	*Not used much
38, 60	Glitter and thick shimmer inks. Very thick inks	
60, 86	Shimmer inks. Thick ink	Athletic jerseys, High-density prints, Limited detail
110, 125	White ink, Athletic ink, Opaque ink	Dark garments, Block/Spot detail
156, 180	Thinner Plastisol inks such as black	Light garments, Overprint on underbase, More detail, Large halftones
200, 230	Waterbase, Graphic, or Thin Reduced Plastisols inks	Soft hand, Simulated process, Halftone prints
280, 305	Four-color process inks, thin waterbase or reduced ink	Four-color process, Soft hand distressed, fine detail or halftones

# Print an All-Over Design

From the online boards of Pinterest to the pages of *Cosmopolitan*, the all-over print trend has earned a continual fashion buzz, turning what was once a fad into a staple style. Fortunately for promotional apparel sales, the look is achievable with the right garment and decorative method.

Creating all-over prints with screen printing is possible, but it requires oversized screens and pallets and, typically, an automatic belt press as well. If you don't have the funds or space for all of that additional equipment, the same look can be achieved more affordably by incorporating another decoration option: Sublimation. "There are many ways to incorporate sublimation into your apparel options for clients of all types," says Christopher Bernat, chief revenue officer for Vapor Apparel (asi/93396). "With the increased demand for full-size graphic tees and the innovations associated with polyester performance fabrics, the trend seems to have strong momentum going forward."

So that you can make the most of that momentum, Bernat shares five critical steps to creating an all-over design that will wow your clients.

Tonia Kimbrough is a contributing writer for Wearables.



**Create a Template:** You need a design template for your shirt (Figure 1). If you are working with an apparel company that is dedicated to sublimation, you will most likely have access to a design template for any style you have. This will allow you to design your art to the specific size and style of the shirt, ensuring that you do not lose critical elements of the art.

**Find the Right Garment:** Get the right shirt for the job and prep it correctly. If you want to do dye sublimation, there are plenty of options when it comes to the shirt you choose. For the best color, you will want to stick with a 100% polyester garment. There are several shirts on the market that offer a cotton-like hand with 100% polyester material. (Note: You can use shirts with a mix of cotton and poly, but the color will not be as vibrant and will not be equal throughout the garment.) You should lay the garment out neatly, doing your best to remove any wrinkles, as they can crease and leave gaps in the print where fabric folds over itself. To be completely safe, you should also lint brush the shirts to remove any contamination from the surface (Figure 2).

**3. Block Ink Transfer:** In order to prevent the artwork from going onto the inside of the back of the shirt you will want to yoke the neck area with some type of blocker (using craft paper or Teflon) to prevent the ink from transferring in this area (Figure 3). This step is optional; it depends on the preferences of your customer for how the shirt will look.

**4. Line It Up:** If you have the right shirt and template for it, the easier it is to line the shirts up with your prints (Figure 4). You want to make sure things line up so there is no part of the shirt that is not getting ink on it. Most templates will give you a one- to two-inch overprint area to ensure this is not a problem. If you have a specific piece of the graphic that must land in the same spot regardless of size, you will need to have a different print file for each shirt size. The best method is to identify a "nesting point" in the art and ensure it is properly placed.

**Use A Quality Press:** Make sure you have the right time, temperature and pressure settings for the job. Ask your shirt vendor to give you recommended settings. If your press is not calibrated correctly, you will have problems with the output. Make sure your vendor has quality equipment to get the job done.

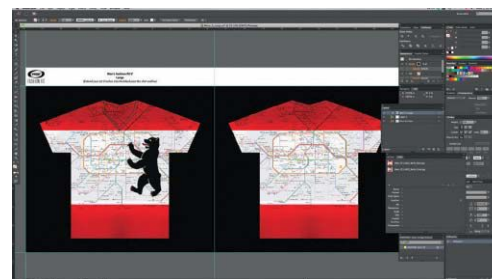


Figure 1



Figure 2

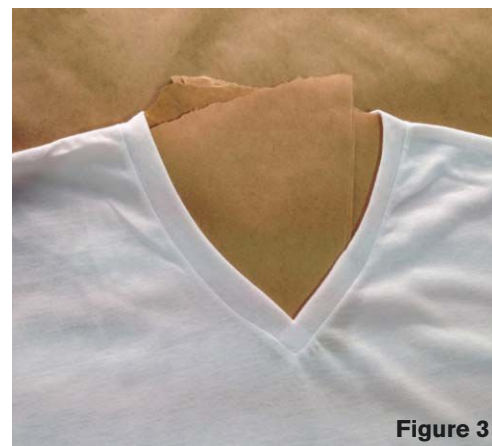


Figure 3



Figure 4



# Simulated Reality

Vivid photo-realistic prints can be achieved with simulated process printing.

BY CARA CHERRY

From a favorite singer to stunning landscapes to the faces of wild animals, today's customers are looking for high-impact designs with vibrant colors on their T-shirts. While there are a number of different types of decorating methods to produce the right look, simulated process printing can replicate all of this and more in stunning fashion.

While similar to traditional four-color process printing with the use of halftones, simulated process separations use spot colors in place of translucent CMYK inks to reproduce the image desired. It's especially suited for printing on dark garments.

Andy Anderson, owner and founder of Anderson Studios Inc., says that while his screen-printing shop has used other methods of screen printing (including CMYK), most of the requests are for simulated process printing. "We are a contract printer and many of our clients are in the music industry," he says. "We have done a lot of work with four-color process over the years, but simulated process allows us to take album covers or photographs of the artist, create designs, and really capture high amounts of color and detail."

"A lot of our clients want to take their designs to the retail level and we have found that simulated process provides more detail and greater definition," says Dru Dalton, chief threader at Real Thread. "A four-color option gives great results on white and, depending on the look you're going for, can be a really good option. But we like the range of colors and the color accuracy that you can get with simulated process, and it is perfect for our customers in the fashion market."

## Examining the Process

Separations for simulated process take traditional spot colors and blend them together using halftones. By using percentage halftones of a limited number of spot colors in the print, the number of colors available for the image increases. Each color is printed on



Simulated process takes traditional spot colors and blends them together using halftones to dramatically increase the possible range of colors and effects, like this example from T Productions Inc. (circle 148 on Free Info Card).

the shirt, and subsequent layers of different colors form the blends and new colors of the image. Printing wet-on-wet allows the colors to blend, but in some instances, flash-curing on press helps keep the details sharp and the colors rich. This technique works equally well on both light- and dark-colored garments.

"Simulated process can be a thing of beauty when done right," says Scott Fresener, director of T-Biz Network. "Ninety-five percent of the separations that I do are for simulated process color." Top-notch artwork is essential to creating the strikingly detailed images that simulated process

is known for. If the original art is too small or at a low dpi (dots per inch), then it will look soft and blurry when blown up to bigger detail. The final image size should be at least 200 to 250 dpi, and it's best if the image is created in a program like Corel-Draw or Adobe Illustrator. "Many of the files I receive are bad and I have to turn down the job," says Fresener. "My mission is to try to educate the beginners to learn about image resolution to ensure a fantastic end-product."



Stunning replication of photos and vivid, colorful prints are possible in screen printing by using simulated process, as demonstrated on these prints from Anderson Studios Inc. (circle 147 on Free Info Card). Photo courtesy of Anderson Studios Inc.

After the right artwork is found, great simulated process prints begin with the color separations. Proper color separation, often done in Photoshop, isn't easy. For decorators left to their own devices, it can be a time-consuming and labor-intensive project. If you don't have experience, there are a number of off-the-shelf products available that can separate colors that don't require Photoshop knowledge. "With the advent of T-shirt color separation software, the process is slightly more automated than before such software existed (for us old-schoolers), but the current versions of all such software will only get you close to a printable file," says Tony Kozlowski, owner of T Productions Inc., in Mishawaka, IN. "The final leg of a separation still requires a professional production artist, with an adequate working knowledge of screen printing to prepare the image for press."

Once the image has been separated, there will be a series of alpha channels that can be imported into a vector application or fine-tuned before completion. That point, says Kozlowski, is when the touch of a professional is needed. "The magic in simulated process still relies on post-separation tweaks to the overall balance of the image," he says, "as well as individual tweaks to each alpha channel and resulting screen."

Adds Fresener, "Automated programs like T-Seps, Separation Studio, QuikSeps, etc., are all designed to save time. I like to think they do the heavy lifting. I run T-Seps on every job I get, but then I put on my screen printer's hat and determine what colors need boosting – depending on the shirt color – and what colors need to be changed to match the original artwork. Also, I try to reduce the color count if I need to. While

some presses can print up to 12 colors, the smaller presses can only print six colors, so it may be necessary to make compromises with the artwork so it works on the press."

#### Fit to Print

Once the color separation process is complete, outputting the files to screens is the next step. The correct screen mesh count is important. Better halftones are achieved with tighter weaves and higher mesh counts. Kozlowski recommends mesh counts of 230-305. "Tight screens are a fundamental requirement for all screen printing," he says. "They become even more critical in simulated process printing to prevent excessive wet-on-wet ink build-up, which could ultimately cause image degradation and color shifts over larger print runs."

Many printers use plastisol ink with an underbase in simulated process to achieve a successful print. As layer upon layer of ink is applied to achieve the image, the print may become a little heavy. Anderson Studios uses a soft-hand adhesive in their ink to reduce the thickness, which allows it to penetrate deeper into the fabric. Real Thread uses water-based and discharge inks to create a softer hand. "With discharge printing," says Dalton, "you're able to achieve a really soft feel, and when you use discharge ink with simulated process, the colors look better with greater definition."

Simulated process is an advanced technique, one that will require a lot of trial and error, even after you have a good understanding of it. Once mastered, it offers tremendous opportunities to create detailed prints with high definition and colors that pop.

*Cara Cherry is a contributing writer for Wearables.*

## GET EQUIPPED

Here is a list of supplies and equipment you'll need to create detailed prints with simulated process.

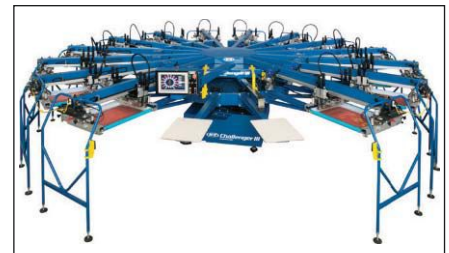
**The CVC Crew** (6210) from Next Level Apparel (asi/73867; circle 149 on Free Info Card) comes in 18 different colors, including charcoal, which is perfect for simulated process printing on dark fabrics.



**T-Seps color separation software** from T-biznet-work.com (circle 150 on Free Info



Card) is an automated color separation plug-in for Adobe Photoshop (any version – Mac or PC). It works with standard plastisol ink colors, specifies mesh count, color sequence, halftone angles and line count.



**The Challenger III automatic screen-printing press** from M&R (circle 151 on Free Info Card) is a high-performance automatic press and is available in 10, 12, 14, 16 and 18 color models. Standard features include: A touch-screen control panel, squeegee pressure regulators, electronically adjustable ink retrieval system to keep ink in the print area and more.



# EQUIPMENT CORNER

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## EQUIPMENT



### ▲LED Retrofit Kit For Screen Exposing Units – Vastex

LED light kits from Vastex (circle 152 on Free Info Card) convert fluorescent screen exposing units to LED exposing units. The kits are easy to install in exposing units of most varieties. The LED exposing unit has a bulb life of 50,000 to 100,000 hours. It also offers low heat emissions and low power consumption.



### ◀Auto Open Clam Shell – Hotronix

The auto open clam shell from Hotronix (circle 153 on Free Info Card) features patented magnetic-assist lock down with automatic release so the top platen pops up when the job is finished. It has digital time and temperature controls, a 3/4-inch non-stick upper platen, and a wide opening for easy layout.

## PRINTERS



### ◀GT-3 Series Direct-to-Garment Printer – Brother International

Brother International (asi/12600; circle 154 on Free Info Card) has introduced the GT-3 Series of Direct-to-Garment Printers

(formerly known as GraffiTee). To celebrate the introduction of this enhanced lineup, Brother is offering current direct-to-garment customers the ability to trade in a qualifying direct-to-garment printer, regardless of its condition, for \$5,000 credit toward a new GT-3 Series Printer, Models GT-341/GT-361/GT-381. The promotion runs through January 31, 2014. The GT-3 series printers feature 20% lower cartridge costs; a new white ink agitation feature for up to 60% reduction in ink waste; and a built-in enlarged print area up to 16 inches x 18 inches for greater versatility.



### ◀Roland Inkjet Printer/Cutter – Imprintables Warehouse

The Roland VersaStudio BN-20 inkjet printer/cutter is now being offered by Imprintables Warehouse (asi/58457; circle 155 on Free Info Card). It can create graphics for fabric including nylon, spandex, and leather as well as a wide range of indoor and outdoor durable graphics.

The printer was developed to provide custom print/cut jobs on demand.



### ▲mPower i-Series Digital Printer – Anajet

Anajet (asi/16000; circle 156 on Free Info Card) celebrated the two-year anniversary of its alliance with Ricoh Printing Systems America (RPSA), a subsidiary of Ricoh Company Ltd. RPSA is the exclusive manufacturer of the MH2420 print heads that are the heart of Anajet's best-selling mPower i-series digital apparel printer. All mPower digital apparel printers print full-color digital images with resolutions ranging up to 1200 dpi. Anajet launched the next-generation mPower i-series in April.

## TRANSFERS



### ▲ RFS Images Appliqué Design – Dalco Athletic

Dalco Athletic (circle 157 on Free Info Card) introduces the New RFS Images, an appliqué design that is made of permanent-pressure sensitive twill (PPST). It is heat applied, with no sewing necessary, and is available in 18 of the most popular school colors. It comes on a clear Mylar carrier sheet, which is peeled off, and the design heat applied in 20 seconds at 335 degrees F with light to medium pressure. It is intended for cotton, polyester, or cotton/poly blended fabrics. It is not recommended for nylon, mesh, or porthole fabrics.

### ► Kiss Cut Distressed Appliqué – Stahls' ID Direct

The new Kiss Cut Distressed Appliqué from Stahls' ID Direct (asi/88984; circle 158 on Free Info Card) can be ordered online. Simply select a size, script or block, font style and one of six levels of distressed effects. Lettering arrives pre-aligned in a single piece with the foreground tacked to the background with a pressure-sensitive adhesive.



## EMBROIDERY



### ▲ E-Zee Cap Backing – Madeira USA

Madeira USA (circle 159 on Free Info Card) now offers the E-Zee Cap Just Right 2.5 oz. in both black and white which features a medium weight tear away. The use of backing when embroidering on caps maintains the machine's tension and insures designs that are clean and crisp in appearance. When stitching on caps, a longer piece of backing that covers two-thirds of the cap will make hooping easier.

## HIGH VISIBILITY

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### ▲ High-Visibility Striping – World Emblem International

World Emblem International (asi/98264; circle 160 on Free Info Card) has introduced high-visibility striping that can be added to existing work shirts, pants, coveralls, vests and more. There are 10 different trims and 48 standard placement locations available for the striping. If the placements required do not fit within the available standard placement locations, World Emblem can create custom templates to meet all safety requirements. The striping can be combined with direct embroidery, emblems and more.



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## Dancing the Night Away

When the students at South Glens Falls High School reach their 28th straight hour of dancing for charity, one could imagine their energy drained and exhaustion setting in. In fact, it's quite the opposite. The South High Marathon Dance builds to a crescendo of anticipation in its final hour. Announcements are made for how much money was raised, who raised the most and who won the event's multiple raffles. The 800 students who danced all day and night create one final flourish with the Strut Your Stuff performance as their families cheer them on in the school's packed gym. "Even after 28 hours of dancing," says Rob Chadwick, co-owner of ARCA Ink and a father of two South High students, "the energy, surprisingly, is electric."

For 36 years, the marathon dance has helped those in need, from paying for medical expenses to sending terminally-ill patients on dream vacations. Last spring the students raised \$489,716.27. It helps people like Nolan Jacox (above), a five-year-old with an autoimmune disease that causes him to produce too many white blood cells. As a result, he is allergic to most foods and must eat through a feeding tube.

ARCA Ink prints multiple garments for the recipients, families,

production crew, alumni, students and more. Rob and Wendy, who own the Queensbury, NY-based screen printer and embroiderer, also created a fundraiser design that – with the help of their daughter Alyssa, a senior and one of the top three fundraisers last year – raised over \$7,000 through sales of hoodies as well as short- and long-sleeve tees. The back of the shirts feature the name of every person that benefited from the money raised through the dance. "The dance and these shirts have helped with the lives of so many people," says Chadwick, who is hoping that ARCA Ink can raise over \$10,000 next year.

The school is also hoping to top its total from last year. Over 90% of the student population participates in the dance. A student committee chooses the causes to support and determines the costumes that will be worn at the dance. "The kids prepare for the dance throughout the year," says Chadwick, who also works security for the dance. "They even practice special dances in their gym classes." In this case, the power of dance is more than just a phrase. – C.J. Mittica



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