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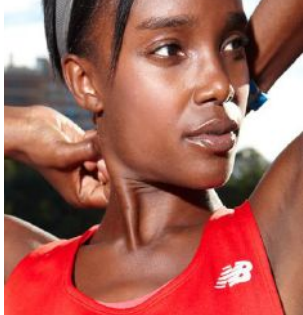
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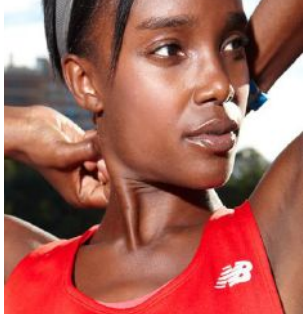
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Embroidery's Voice & Vision

December 2012

POWER

7

5

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COVER STORY

29 The Power 75

Stitches reveals its third-annual list of the most powerful people and companies in the industry today. Ranked from 1-75, everyone on this list is influencing the direction the decorating industry is taking in 2012 and beyond.

BY NICOLE ROLLENDER,
CHRISTOPHER RUVO, CARA
CHERRY AND ALEX PALMER

FEATURES

52 A Look Forward

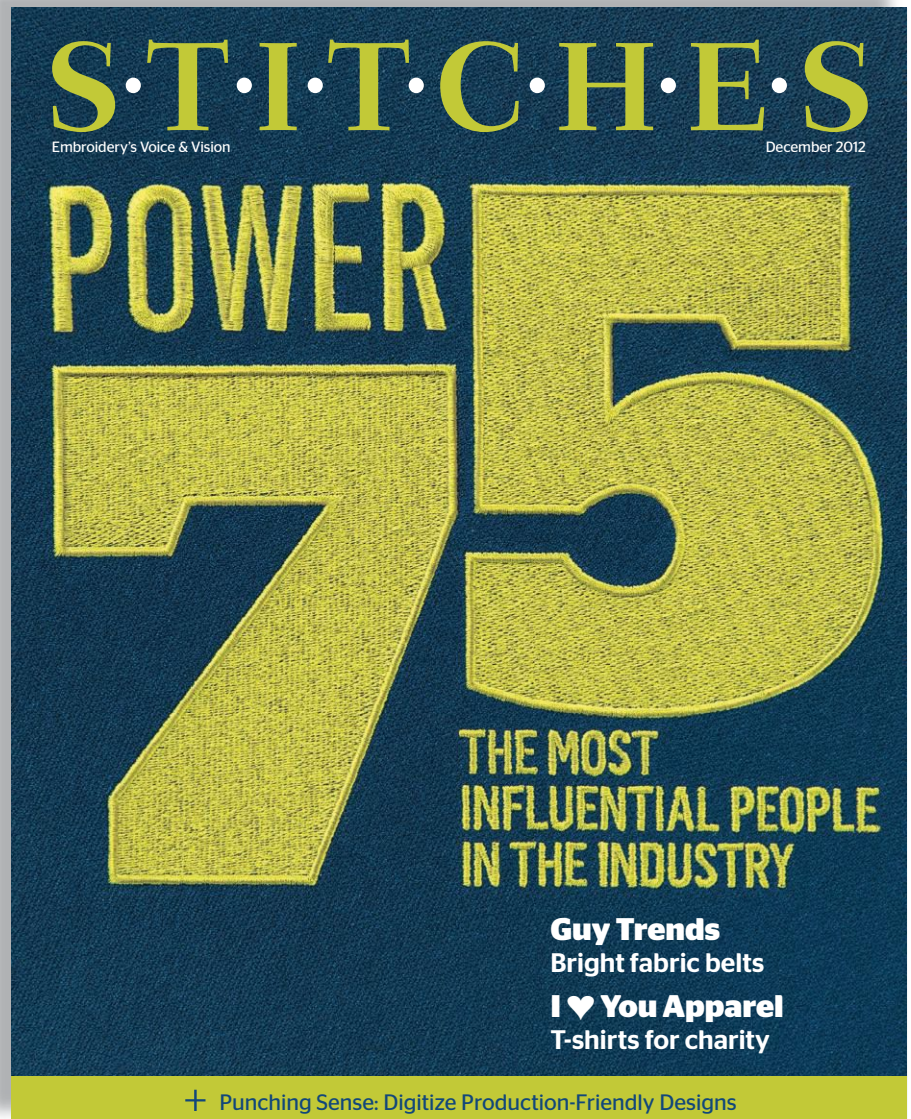
How will technology continue to shape decorating companies' futures? How will decorators' overseas competition affect U.S.-based business? Check out what members of the *Stitches* Power 75 have to say on important industry topics as they offer their outlooks for business in 2013.


BY JOAN CHAYKIN AND NICOLE
ROLLENDER

56 Apparel With A Heart

Across the U.S., apparel decorators are using their stitching and printing skills to support worthy causes.

BY CHRISTOPHER RUVO





Anvil's super-soft Combed Ring Spun Fashion Crewnecks and Full-Zip Hooded Sweatshirts come in a wide range of sizes and 10 great colors. Features like back patch, rolled forward shoulders and bright-white circular draw cords and zippers give this fashion fleece a unique edge, keeping your customers on-trend.

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facebook

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About the Cover

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Design and digitizing by Affinity Express

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Stitches Staff Writer Chris Ruvo talks about unique ways you can break into the country music and equestrian market in *Stitches*' newest video series, "The Stitch Report," which gives you some of the latest trends here and abroad in the embroidery industry. Go to Stitches.com to watch the video.



Sales Forecast Looks Bright

Good news abounds in the wearables industry. Average order sizes are up. Buyer budgets are beginning to relax. Does that mean you can rest on your laurels? Of course not. The proactive approach will pay dividends in 2013 - which is where ASI's *Wearables* Sales Forecast comes in. Visit Stitches.com to examine the most noticeable shifts in the industry, and drill down to identify the most prevalent tastes in decoration methods, performance properties, top markets and more. With the right plan, next year's good news can turn into great news for your business.

Top Fashion Trends for 2013

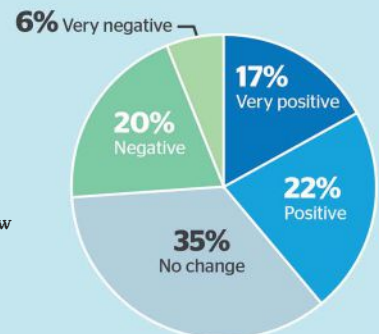
What's old in fashion inevitably becomes new again, and 2013 styles will be no different - designers are putting a modern twist on some styles we've seen before. Visit Stitches.com to take a look at some of these hot trends, including Peter Pan colors, puff sleeves and grunge.

Your Bottom Line

In a recent poll on Stitches.com, we asked industry professionals: Considering the increase of recalls and scrutiny, what's your outlook on promos for children?

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of respondents say that the outlook for youth-directed marketing campaigns will remain unchanged or positive. Get educated:

Turn to page 52 to see how important our Power 75 members think product-safety testing is to the decorated-apparel industry.





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contributors



In this month's "Punching Sense," **BONNIE LANDSBERGER**, owner of Cannon Falls, MN-based Moonlight Design, tackles how to eliminate unnecessary stitches when you're punching a client's design. For one, choose the most efficient stitch type to use. "A bean stitch used for an outline is created with three stitches," she writes. "Often, a double line of run stitches will be enough; it'll also eliminate a third of the stitches in the outline. Bean stitches can also result in more stitches than a low-density satin stitch, especially in a small design that requires the outlining bean stitch to be shorter. When in doubt, experiment with both and choose the one with the fewest stitches that doesn't detract from the final appearance."



In this issue's "5-Minute Wisdom," we interview **BRENT BOLM**, owner of Eagle Activewear in Warrenton, MO. What's the next big decorating trend? "Embroidery/sublimation combinations and sublimated twill are the next big things," he says. "Mixing embroidery and sublimation is a natural for us, given that we have all the tools. Embroidery and sublimation are both value-added processes. When they're combined, the results are stunning. Sublimated twill for the team market will explode over the next few years and we plan to lead the way."



In this issue's "Ask An Expert," **ERICH CAMPBELL**, digitizer and e-commerce manager for Albuquerque, NM-based Black Duck Inc., tackles a top punching question: How do I digitize a design so that it retains its artistic integrity, but is also production-friendly? One thing he covers? Appropriate densities. "Excess density will cover the fabric, but it increases run time and distorts substrates," he writes. "With proper underlay, you can reduce your densities, making for both a faster run and a softer hand for your garment. You'll find that using long, structured underlay stitches that lift the top stitching above the substrate minimizes show-through. You should always attempt to use the minimum density needed for coverage. The best designs are tailored to the specific fabric and color combinations of a particular run."

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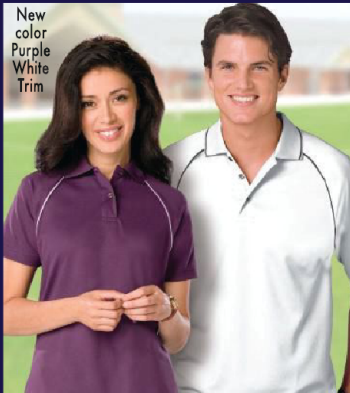
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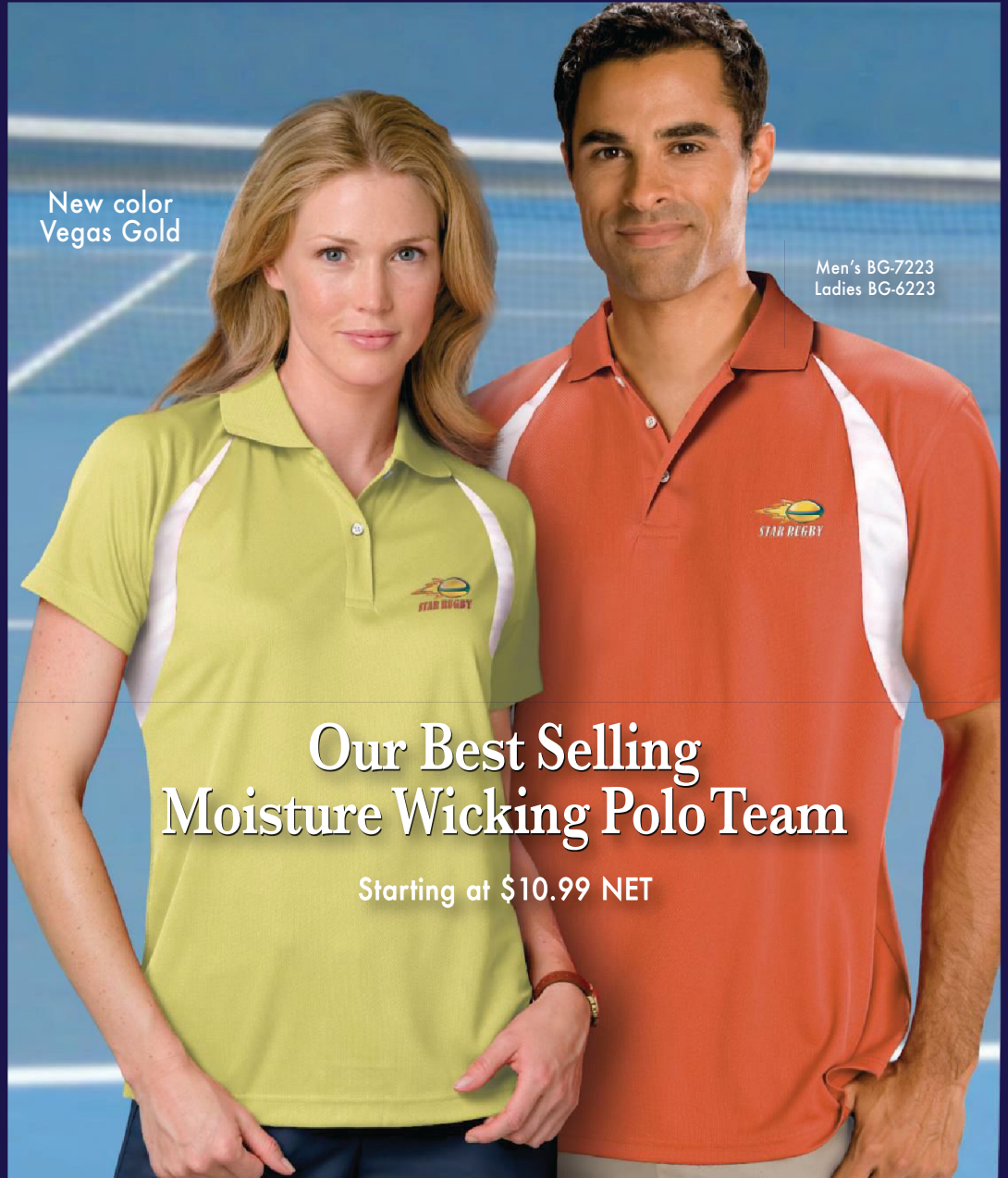


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Stitches has a page on Facebook! Please join us (and, please spread the word)! When you become a member of our *Stitches* Facebook fan page, you’ll connect with us and lots of other decorators and suppliers who are developing innovative approaches to decorating apparel and all kinds of other items. You’ll get the latest *Stitches* and industry news, view our latest videos, answer polls, read case studies and pick other fans’ brains for their most effective strategies to increase your decorated apparel sales – and your bottom line. Visit www.facebook.com/stitchesmag to join.

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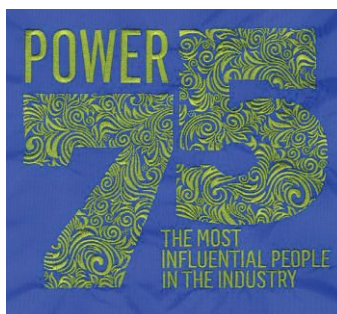
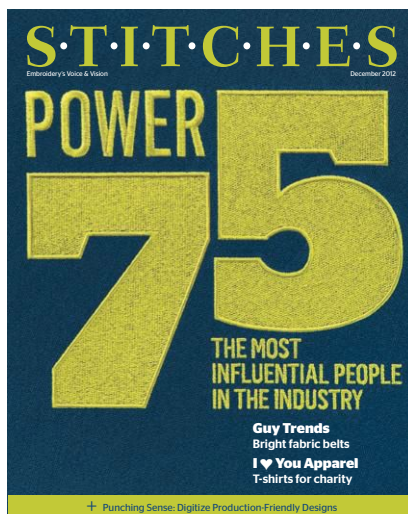
This month’s cover (top) design was digitized and embroidered by Affinity Express, an international firm with offices in India, the Philippines and Elgin, IL. But it wasn’t the only piece that Affinity created as a possible cover design. To flex their collective creative muscles, the Affinity team punched and embroidered several variations on the design, such as this piece with open floral elements (bottom).

Despite digitizing and embroidering challenges on the floral piece, a three-person team – consisting of a digitizer, sampler and creative mentor – collaborated successfully to bring the 50,302-stitch design to life.

According to the Affinity team, one tough task was to give the textual design a look based on the theme. To leap this hurdle, says Affinity’s Santosh Mane, the team created multiple options before finalizing an arrangement that would capture the spirit of the artwork and impress as an embroidered piece.

Another challenge Affinity had to overcome was getting the borders of the digits in the floral design without any outline. This was overcome by one of Affinity’s experienced designers punching every detail as per the artwork until all the elements were set just right, Mane says.

Digitized with Wilcom ES software, the single-color design was stitched with Madeira Polyneon threads using a Barudan machine. According to Mane, the fact that the piece was developed for the cover of *Stitches* provided great motivation. “This was a great honor that inspired our team in creating such an interesting design,” he says. – *Christopher Ruvo*



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“The mass-personalization revolution is happening now. The future of the decorating industry is bright, and we’re excited to play a role in it.”

– Martin Kristiaman, DecoNetwork Pty. Ltd.

Nicole Rollender
nrollender@asicentral.com



This year’s Power 75 are an optimistic group: 100% of the industry power players say the economy will improve or remain flat in 2013. This special issue reveals our third-annual Power List of industry heavyweights who’ve effected growth and change in 2012 – and who we see influencing the direction the industry takes in 2013. They weigh in on issues facing decorators and the industry, projecting lots of opportunities for savvy shops to grow.

Once again, a majority of Power Listers say online decoration business models that offer mass-personalization options will be key to staying competitive in 2013. Decorators and digitizers who offer clients the ability to upload artwork, personalize designs, create virtual samples, and place and track orders online will come out ahead. “The mass-personalization revolution is happening now,” says Martin Kristiaman, CEO of DecoNetwork Pty. Ltd. “It’s now possible to use cloud-based technology, with low-cost subscription fees, to deliver small runs. The future of the decorating industry is bright, and we’re excited to play a role in it.”

Both decorators and suppliers will need to be more aware of consumer demands and competitor products and services to keep their offerings fresh and relevant to clients. It’ll be paramount for decorators to assess customers’ changing needs (and offer innovative products and services) – and be equipped to fulfill both large-volume orders and short custom runs for customers located across the U.S. “Efficient and profitable mass customization is the most important step forward that a decorator can make this year,” say Tas Tsonis and Brian Goldberg, co-CEOs of Pulse Microsystems Ltd. “The most effective way to compete with imports is to offer personalization, which can’t be done as effectively overseas.”

On the supplier end, Power Listers said offering standout new products, enhancing customer service and leveraging new customer-facing technology are the top ways to stay competitive. “Suppliers will have to focus on their core clients to stay ahead of competitors – because their competition comes from around the block, and the globe,” says Hajo Voeller, president and CEO of Madeira USA Ltd. “Anyone can compete, whether it’s a website that completes the work on the other side of the world, or the supplier down the street, who can cut down on shipping expenses and maintain rapid turnaround times. How a company differentiates itself, and fulfills the needs of its chosen clientele, will be the key to its growth – and to its survival.”

For more expert insights, check out our third-annual Power List of 75 industry heavyweights in our cover story, “The Power 75 ...” starting on page 29. Enjoy the issue!

We Asked The Power 75 ...

What do you see as a top industry issue or trend in 2013?



Erich Campbell, Black Duck Inc.: “With widespread adoption of social media in our customer base, garment decorators will want to put their message

where there are the most eyes. Decorators will grasp the difference between traditional and engagement marketing, where the relationship developed with current and prospective customers is primary and the marketing messaging is secondary. Once those relationship-based models take hold, direct marketing can be more focused, addressing customers’ specific concerns through real interaction.”



Martin Kristiaman, DecoNetwork Pty. Ltd.: “Challenging economic conditions and high unemployment will encourage the sentiment to buy U.S.-made products. The

good news for decorating businesses is that it’s now possible to use advanced cloud-based technology, with low-cost subscription fees, to deliver small runs locally. While a large-volume order justifies overseas production in low-cost countries, for small runs there’s an economic ‘transaction-cost’ barrier that makes local production more competitive than overseas production and shipping.”



Jay Malanga, Shopworks: “A challenge will be to retain and add good employees as the economy heats up some. This will be a trend over the next few years.”



Rick Mouty, Profill Holdings (asi/300152): “Being able to service small orders profitably. Digital direct-to-garment and dye-sublimation printing are great for

producing small orders, as they have very nominal setup costs.”



Kristine Shreve, EnMart: “More companies will realize the value of creating communities online in 2013. As more information and guidance is available, more

companies will start to see the ROI.”

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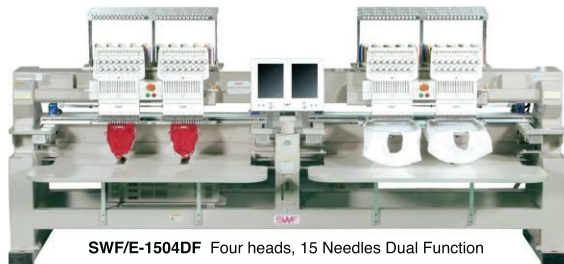
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Growth Spurt

If you stay on top of things like customer service, turnaround time and quality, your business has no choice but to grow. Our business had already hit last year's numbers by the end of September. We're expected to finish 2012 with a \$230,000 increase in sales. We have all of our marketing set for next year already. As long as we keep doing what we're doing, growth should stay steady.

Howard Potter

A&P Master Images

Say It Proud

I really hope to start an It Takes a Stitch blog beginning in 2013. It's time to get it off my to-do list and into reality. The goal is to highlight the kinds of projects that I've found are most enjoyable and profitable.

Regina Cassidy

It Takes a Stitch Custom Embroidery



Our business had already hit last year's numbers by the end of September.

Howard Potter, A&P Master Images

Radio Star

We have a few Twitter followers and we're adding all the time. We've also approached all seven radio stations here in Halifax, Nova Scotia. We now have more than 50,000 followers/listeners; most calls to us are new customers. I highly recommend buying into a radio station that has 20 times the reach of Twitter. We've been asked to continue in the winter, and we're expanding to provinces around us too.

Michael Pasha

Digitizers Studio

Not Slowing Down

Our design firm offers embroidery, sublimation and rhinestone custom designs. Most of our work is embroidery on shirts, baby items and tote bags. Recently, we've been contracted to design and hand-dye silk flags for marching bands. This has led to several orders for hand-dyed custom drapes! Our business is ever-expanding and as two retired teachers, we're willing to go wherever it leads. Who says life calms down once you retire?

And, we just love *Stitches* magazine!

Nancy Paulmenn

Infinity Design & Embroidery

Service-Oriented

We're a family-run embroidery, chenille and retail sports equipment store that's celebrating 20 years in business this year. We pride ourselves in quality customer service and products produced in a timely manner. Our customers always come first!

Kayla Schermer

AST Sports

Sports Center

We've been around for 25 years and we're still located in peaceful downtown Oswego, IL. We were one of the first screen-printing businesses to open up in town, and now we offer embroidery, as well as high school letterman jackets, chenille and sewing of all kinds of patches onto jackets. We also stock our store with screen-printed and embroidered athletic apparel, socks, hair scrunchies, pom-poms, caps and more.

Javier Gonzalez

The Locker Room

All Together Now

I work for Promotional Resources Inc. in St. Joseph, MN. We always look forward to the new issue of *Stitches*. Looking for the needle is a company job – we pass the magazine around until someone finds it.

Kathy Daiker

Promotional Resources Inc.

Tips of the Trade

To remain successful in your decorating business, it's important to keep good records, stay organized and keep track of cash flow. Set goals and objectives, and stay up-to-date on industry trends and issues. Always focus on improvements in sales but know your limits, and find talented, motivated staff members. Use social media more, and always thank those who helped you get to where you are, including family, friends and, of course, your customers. Finally, take a break. Running a small business is hard work, and sometimes the best way to re-ignite your passion is to take a vacation.

Debby Labrucherie

Double L Designs

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Got a question for Phil?

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

Although I try my best, I can't always answer every request, so please continue your search on your own. Remember, if you contact the companies I mention, tell them you heard about them here!

PS. If you become an ASI Decorator Member with ESP, you'll have access to every item in the wearables and promotional products industry from 3,000+ reputable suppliers. Just call (800) 546-1388 to get started!

Hi Phil,
Do you know of a supplier that has Columbia fleece jackets in bright colors? I can find them in black, gray and navy, but would like them in brighter colors like royal blue, pink, green or red. Any suggestions? - Pat

Get ready for a rainbow! Slide on down to SanMar (asi/84863); (800) 346-3369; www.sanmar.com; for products XM6814, XM6816 and SM6113. These jackets come in colors such as Azul and Beet, which are significantly brighter than your usual grays and navys.

Hi Phil,
I'm looking for 100% polyester fleece beanies in dark navy. Thank you! - William

Keep your clients warm with this cozy little collection of beanies from three industry suppliers. First, check out product 45120 from Trimark Sportswear (asi/92122); (800) 723-8383; www.trimarksportswear.com. Then, mosey on over to Hit Promotional

Products (asi/61125); (800) 282-4480; www.hitpromo.net; to try on product 1079 E. Finally, don this beanie from Vantage Apparel (asi/93390); (800) 221-0020; www.vantageapparel.com; product 0177.

Phil,
I'm looking for brown youth sweatpants, open and elastic bottom. The local school colors are brown and orange: two colors which are quite hard to find, unless you special order them. - Jane

Get ready to drum up some school spirit with lots of products from Arrowwear (asi/36915); (888) 276-9327; www.arrowwear.com; look at products 1397, 1497, 4300 and more. Then, pump up the jam on the football field with product J811YP from ATT Headwear (asi/30245); (800) 448-7031; www.attheadwear.com. And, just to give you a few more exciting options, check out 20 Degrees Below (asi/92366); (800) 413-2129; www.20belowasi.com; products PA130-PANT, PA131-PANT and more; and Vos Sports (asi/94200); (888) 268-6867; www.vosports.com; product 890P.

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Hi Phil,

I'm looking for good-quality Christmas stockings and Santa hats at a reasonable cost. - Diana

Ho, ho, ho! Hope you left those cookies and milk out for me for finding you these festive items. First, check out some merry-making items from Brighter Promotions (*asi/42016*); (800) 446-3200; *www.brighterpromotions.com*; they're products PAR026, PAR027 and HAT520. Then, pack your stocking full of products WP1129X, H1518X, S2385 and S2388X from WOWLine (*asi/98360*); (800) 655-6650; *www.wowline.com*. Finally, your list isn't complete until you check out The Beistle Co. (*asi/39540*); (717) 532-2131; *www.beistle.com*; products 20733, 20734 and 20731.

The following two exchanges are adapted from conversations on Phil's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/philstitch).

Phil,

I need black non-plastic garment bags, zip-front, with storage for shoes in the back. They must be sturdy, as I'll embroider names on them for a choir group. Got any good places to look? - Cathy

I've got this one in the bag! Give your choir something to sing about with product PL951 from Debcos (*asi/48886*); (800) 263-3554;

www.debcosolutions.com. Then, make some beautiful music when you show your buyer products GB44, GB818 and GB2466 from Brave USA (*asi/41630*); (800) 542-9338; *www.braveusa.com*. To give you a few more options, look at Allcasion Travelware (*asi/34046*); (888) 838-8998; *www.allcasion.com*; product L648. Also, look at ACRO (*asi/30981*); (888) 747-2276; *www.acrobag.com*; product 4810.

Hello Phil,

I'm looking for a wide-brim camo bucket cap. Thanks. - Michele

Your client definitely won't be hiding with a cool Bucket Wide Brim Hat from Seba Premium Sportswear (*asi/86043*); (877) 732-2355; *www.sebaintl.com*. Or, send your clients on safari with Nissin Cap & Bag (*asi/30107*); (800) 548-8443; *www.nissincap.com*; products 23103 and 24102. And two more to round out this great hat collection: products 8621J-C and 8621I from ATT Headwear (*asi/30245*); (800) 448-7031; *www.attheadwear.com*.



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by Sara Lavenduski

Brent Bolm, owner of Eagle Activewear in Warrenton, MO, talks about why the college market is so lucrative, how to satisfy customers' expectations, and why you need to balance risk and reward as a decorator.

A self-perpetuating college market means a steady customer flow. I started as a sports licensed product sales representative, and I noticed that the professional sports league merchandise suffered through constant hot and cold streaks. The college market was more stable since there's a new crop of freshmen and alumni every year. Then, I got the bright idea to become a collegiate licensee and produce the goods myself. I thought I'd fill downtime on the machines with contract work. As it turns out, that's our main business now.

Local community and culture inspire the best designs. I wouldn't necessarily consider myself a great designer, but every once in a while we hit on a good idea. I think the best designs are timely and rooted in local culture. A couple of years ago, our local high school went to the state championship football game. Since we had experienced very limited success in the



past in football, we used the tagline "Creating History One Victory at a Time." It resonated with our community.

We're all in this together. Special people can do incredible things under pressure. Since we're in the contract business, my staff is always up against tight deadlines. I don't believe in the "that isn't my job" mentality. Everyone lends a hand where it's needed most on any given day.

Customers expect timeliness combined with quality work. This may sound crazy, but I love the challenge of getting orders out the door on a timely basis. The real trick is to ensure top-notch quality at the same time. In the contract business, the number-one thing people are concerned with is, "Did my order ship today?"

Investing in equipment keeps you competitive. I started with a six-head embroidery machine in my basement about 15 years ago, and through the years, I've added machines as we needed them. In the last five to seven years, I've turned most of my attention to everything digital. I added a CO2 laser to cut fabric for appliqué, and now we run name badges, awards and other non-apparel items. Next was a YAG laser to mark metal ingots and a debosser to fill needs for my number-one client, followed by

an eco-solvent printer and a couple of heat presses. Since I had the equipment, I branched out into portions of the sign, banner and decal businesses. A wide-format sublimation printer led to a 40 x 44 heat press for all-over digital apparel and other items like tablecloths. A latex printer was added this year for my new sign business serving the ASI distributor market at Eaglecl.com. We also went old-school and bought a couple of sewing machines to hem the banners.

Embroidery/sublimation combinations and sublimated twill are the next big things. Mixing embroidery and sublimation is natural for us, given that we have all the tools. Embroidery and sublimation are both value-added processes. When they're combined, the results are stunning. Sublimated twill for the team market will explode over the next few years, and we plan to lead the way.

"I don't believe in the 'that isn't my job' mentality."

Brent Bolm, Eagle Activewear

Keep clients happy - and don't practice price-based selling. Always find ways to sell additional products and processes to existing customers. A happy customer is the easiest person to sell to again. Also, never sell based on price because there will always be someone willing to undercut you. The best overall value will win in the end, and you'll build lasting relationships.

This career is the ride of a lifetime. Balancing risk and reward usually requires blind ambition. You have to have a certain amount of self-confidence combined with an occasional reality check. Saying this business is a roller coaster ride is an understatement. Stick to your goals; do what it takes to get there.

The next generation carries the torch. My greatest achievement is Luke Bolm, my two-year-old son.





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by Julie A. Cajigas

hot trends FROM BERLIN



Samir Hussein

Designer Killian Kerner injected a bit of fun into workwear with this look from Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Berlin. Accenting a corporate-chic suit with a playful graphic tee, a funky blue belt and a boisterous yellow and green tote, the look nods at neon brights, which continue to be relevant, and soft pastels, which trend annually in fall/winter. Instead of dress shoes, the model is wearing sandals with socks. The little peek-toe adds a sense of whimsy, while the rich red leather echoes the formality of the tailored jacket and pant. This look might not translate directly into the corporate or casual world, but individual elements can be incorporated into apparel looks your clients want.

GET THE LOOK

TRENDY TOTE

Brightly colored totes aren't just for the ladies anymore. In runway fashion over the past year, totes have been important accessories in many menswear collections. Most commonly, men are carrying large, square or rectangular totes in bold colors. This square tote in lime green from Gemline (*asi/56070*) is the right pick. Lime and black are colors associated with technology for 2012-2013, and at a great price point, this tote is perfect for a convention or meeting giveaway.

Available from Gemline (*asi/56070*; circle 151 on Free Info Card); (800) 800-3200; www.mygemline.com



GRAPHIC TEE

This bold graphic T-shirt is one of many offered by Peace Frogs (*asi/47432*), and it captures not only the spirit of the T-shirt in Killian Kerner's collection, but also one of the hottest color trends for spring 2013. 2012's hot hue was tangerine, but this spring, it'll give way to a softer, sweeter shade called nectarine.

Available from Peace Frogs Inc. (*asi/47432*; circle 152 on Free Info Card); (804) 695-1314; www.peacefrogs.com



BRIGHT BELT

Adding a touch of funk to a pair of jeans or even a more corporate-casual look like the one in Killian Kerner's show is easy with this psychedelic belt from Croakies (*asi/47485*). With many patterns and colors to choose from, an adjustable belt is a great giveaway that almost anyone can enjoy. Add a touch of custom decoration that really stands out and this runway accessory can become a coveted wardrobe item.

Available from Croakies (*asi/47485*; circle 153 on Free Info Card); (800) 443-8620; www.croakiesasi.com

GUY TRENDS

Fabric Belts



Available from WOV-IN (*asi/92980*); circle 154 on Free Info Card; (800) 558-1709; www.wov-in.com



Available from SnugZ/USA Inc. (*asi/88060*); circle 157 on Free Info Card; (888) 447-6840; www.snugzusa.com



Available from Spirit Promos (*asi/88722*); circle 155 on Free Info Card; (770) 744-2114; www.spirit-promo.com



Available from San Lines (*asi/84810*); circle 156 on Free Info Card; (917) 512-2913; www.sanlines.com

Finding a fashion-forward promotion for men that end-users will enjoy, while showcasing your client's brand or image, can be challenging. T-shirt giveaways are popular, but they won't make your client stand out from the pack. Lanyards and other functional items are good choices for conventions, meetings and events. A giveaway that will ultimately be kept, worn and enjoyed: a belt. Easily customizable to a wide range of sizes, and a great place to showcase brand colors or a step-repeat logo pattern, fabric or "web" belts are comfortable, functional and fun.

From teenagers to adults, the hipster trend is alive and well, and part of that trend is the fabric belt. A unique product that's appearing in many craft and handmade shops is the seatbelt belt. Crafted from the seatbelt of a car, these belts are the ultimate hipster fashion accessories that show not only wearers' personalities, but also their penchant for green or reclaimed materials. A fabric belt with a zinc alloy buckle echoes the handmade trend and brings bright colors into the equation.

Perhaps the best part of the web belt is the ability to create something unique to your customer's company or organization. "You can customize any section of a web belt," says Stephan Yang, marketing manager for San Lines (*asi/84810*). For example, "you can alternate the fabric or the buckle, customize the pattern of the belt or create a buckle with a higher-value appearance," he says. Decorators can "let us know your budget, quantity, the ship-to address and a deadline, and we can create a solution for your giveaway."

HOT HUE

Poppy

Fashionistas everywhere rejoiced when the 2013 Pantone fashion color report was released, with a focus on balance and energy. "The expression 'balancing act' is something we all relate to as we strive to find harmony in the frantic pace of our everyday lives," says Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Pantone Color Institute. "The same can be said for fashion as we look for balance between light and bright, classic and new. This season's color palette emphasizes this need for balance, while at the same time allows for individuality, self-expression and excitement."

Pantone is celebrating that optimism and passion with the shade Poppy Red (Pantone 17-1664). Inspired by Asian fashion and culture, the bold red shade offers a seductive, sensual pop of color that can take a dress from normal to knockout. A bright, airy red, it's easy to imagine Poppy Red translating into a fun T-shirt color or the hue in a Julia Roberts-worthy cocktail dress. Pair poppy with nectarine and lemon zest for a rich tonal look, or accent it with cool cobalt blue to bring out its richness. Black and ivory are the right neutrals to complement poppy next spring.



Available from Ash City (*asi/37127*); circle 158 on Free Info Card; (866) 274-2489; www.ashcity.com



Available from Blanks Plus (*asi/40642*); circle 159 on Free Info Card; (213) 629-0006; www.blanksplus.net



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look book

ACCESSORY SPOTLIGHT

Winter Sets

FASHION TIP: When choosing a hat, glove and/or scarf set, consider logo colors. Even if you don't imprint the set with the logo itself, use colors that visually support your client's brand.

End-users love receiving matched winter-weather accessories sets. And, the sets available at wholesale feature quality, functional materials regardless of the price point. Whether you go with polar fleece or wool, you're still ensuring the end-user's comfort and the product's wearability.

Winter-weather sets are great because of their imprintability, their visibility when it comes to showcasing logos, and their affordability. "These sets present a wonderful way of making a logo visible when it's cold – and at a fraction of the price of a jacket," says Shurli Allinott, president of Brandwear (*asi/41545*). Mike Stringer, vice president of business development for Dollar Days Inc. (*asi/50287*), agrees: "There's no better opportunity to get all eyes on your logo than with winter apparel promotions that draw attention."

Paul Tang, operations manager for the Apollo Group (*asi/73392*), highly recommends considering winter accessory sets for any promotional event. "People always need hats, gloves and scarves during the winter," he says, "so you're providing a service to your customers." Embroidery, screen printing or heat transfers are "excellent ways to showcase the brand" on the accessories, he says.

Because winter accessory sets are cost-effective, they're ideal for giveaway and incentive programs, and large events such as trade shows, outdoor events and career fairs. You can also pitch them for food, beverage and entertainment companies. Stringer suggests using these sets as nonprofit and charitable giveaways. That way, he says, "it's about associating a brand and organization with reliability, security and warmth." – *Alissa Tallman*



RECYCLED ACRYLIC SET

This knitted winter set (WS-4000-O) that includes a hat, scarf and gloves is made of recycled acrylic. The set arrives in a vinyl gift bag and is available in seven colors. Available from Apollo Group (*asi/73392*; circle 160 on Free Info Card); (800) 982-2146; www.apolloemb.com.

ACRYLIC SET

This acrylic scarf, hat and glove set (RO1883) comes in a wide range of colors. Available from Dollar Days (*asi/50287*; circle 161 on Free Info Card); (480) 922-8155; www.dollardays.com.

WOOL BLEND SET

This cozy brown or navy hat (790) and matching mittens (792) feature a wool and acrylic mix. Available from Brandwear (*asi/41545*; circle 162 on Free Info Card); (866) 339-1122; www.brandwear.ca.



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TREND ALERT

Next Level Fashions



Available from Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788; circle 188 on Free Info Card); (800) 523-2721; www.ultraclub.com

You're going to be seeing more and more designer and fashion-forward brands available at wholesale, and Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788) is taking a major step forward in that arena by expanding its line of Next Level Fashions. "The designers had a simple credo: to provide the latest fashions with meticulous quality in the most heavenly soft fabrics available," says Bodek and Rhodes' Director of Marketing Mary Ellen Nichols. "The designers crafted each garment with features that the young-at-heart-of-all-ages crave in their clothing, including get-noticed colors, roomier fits, luxurious combed cotton and blended fabrics, side seams to ensure better fit, longer, fashion necklines and silhouettes."

These garments are also crafted in sweatshop-free and child labor-free facilities that are WRAP (Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production) certified. "There's a sense of responsibility that respects our environment and the world," Nichols says.

What makes Next Level a top brand isn't also its commitment to affordability, which Nichols suggests is important for any new designer brand in the ad specialty market. "Every shirt feels better when it's a true value, and that's why Next Level produces its clothing at prices far less than those of other young contemporary brands," she says. Bodek and Rhodes added several new looks, including a ladies' Poly/Cotton Burnout Thermal and Hoodie, and a men's CVC V-Neck T-shirt.

JULIE A. CAJIGAS is a contributing writer to *Stitches*.

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tips & tricks to increase your productivity

By Tonia Kimbrough

saving 9

Reduce Costs By Up to 15%



Hirsch International (asi/14982); circle 165 on Free Info Card

Adelco's new Eco-Text series of high-production conveyor dryers reduce energy consumption, which, in turn, lowers the cost of operation. Triple insulation with an air curtain keeps the exterior cool and avoids heat loss. "You'll save **10% to 15%** operating costs on dryers of a similar size," says Gavin Kidd, director of the MHM Screenprinting Division of Hirsch International (asi/14982). An optional feature for even greater efficiency is a gas-flow indicator, which allows energy-conscious shop owners to track usage and running costs. For more information, visit www.hic.us.

12% Savings On Screens

The new GSG Green Screen Exchange program stretches your production budget by keeping frames in production vs. storage. Instead of shipping used frames, having them re-stretched and shipped back, when a 23" by 31" aluminum frame needs new mesh, it's shipped to GSG and a comparable frame is sent back with the mesh of your choice. "The Green Screens will save an average of 10% to 12%," says Sarah Kewak, marketing assistant at Graphic Solutions Group (GSG). For more information, visit www.gogsg.com.



Graphic Solutions Group; circle 166 on Free Info Card

QUICK TIPS



➔ **Keep designs on stretchy fabric from cracking or distorting.** Cad-Cut Solutions Clear printer/cutter material is specially designed for use on materials such as spandex. For more information, visit www.imprintableswarehouse.com.

Imprintables Warehouse (asi/58475); circle 167 on Free Info Card

➔ **Eliminate worry about constant thread breaks.** Robison-Anton's Super Strength Rayon from American Embroidery Supply is smooth and easy running; plus, it's friendly for your equipment, reducing the wear and tear sometimes associated with coarser threads. Contact sales@americansupply.com.



American Embroidery Supply; circle 168 on Free Info Card



Great Dane Graphics; circle 169 on Free Info Card

➔ **Get a head start on occupational logos.** Great Dane Graphics recently added new designs to its Occupations category, enabling you to create a professional-looking logo or graphic without having to hire a freelance artist for small-business customers. All designs are royalty-free, high-quality, full-color stock images that come as a high-resolution, layered Adobe Photoshop file with two layers: artwork and background. Visit www.greatdanegraphics.com.

Product Pick

The Duetta 2 is among a number of new sewing machines geared to embroidery and quilting enthusiasts from Brother International. Its embroidery features include over 400 built-in embroidery designs; an enhanced LCD screen display; a large work area that accommodates frame sizes up to 7" by 12"; and a USB port to connect the Duetta 2 to a computer for downloading designs. Quilters will also appreciate the Brother Automatic Height Adjuster feature that senses fabric thickness and adjusts the presser foot pressure accordingly. A pivot function allows users to easily turn fabric when the machine stops, a useful feature when working on corners. Learn more at www.brother.com.



Brother International; circle 170 on Free Info Card

unbelievable decorating

Lightning Uniform Strikes With Visual Impact



Why limit your design space? That concept informed this striking uniform created by Teamwork Athletic Apparel (*asi/90673*). The jersey and pant are visually integrated with decorative elements that flow from top to bottom for maximum impact.

“One of the nicest features of this uniform set is that the three colors, in this case red, white and blue, are totally customizable,” says Andy Lehrer, vice president. “Pink, fluorescent green and navy could be put there, or any three colors that the customer wants. Lettering is applied as the garment is manufactured, in one single process. Custom team logos can be placed anywhere on the garment, and again there’s no limitation to colors or size.”

Team names and player names can be in numerous fonts, with one-, two- or three-color outlines as desired. “The lettering is also part of the fabric, so there’s no heaviness, stickiness, peeling or cracking, ever,” Lehrer says.

Teamwork Athletic Apparel (*asi/90673*); circle 171 on Free Info Card

Decoration Insider

Bump Up The Bling



Imprintables Warehouse (*asi/58475*); circle 167 on Free Info Card

Get the inside track on bling with expanded options in sparkling materials for heat-applied decoration. Imprintables Warehouse (*asi/58475*) now offers its Spectra Bling Cutter Material in seven new fashion colors: lavender, light green, royal, dark pink, light gold, emerald and purple. It can be applied to light or dark fabrics that include 100% cotton, 100% polyester or poly/cotton blends.

CAD-CUT Direct has assembled four of its most popular bling materials – Glitter Flake, Fashion-FILM Electric, Hologram and Fashion-FILM Metallic II – each in three colors in a single, handy kit. Combined with color swatches; cutting and application instructions; a CD with free vector graphics; and craft paper, this collection readies you to cater to cheerleading, spiritwear, fashion and boutique customers.



CAD-CUT Direct; circle 174 on Free Info Card

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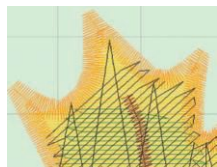
Lower Your Stitch Count

By Bonnie Landsberger

Keeping your stitch count at a minimum is a priority for accomplishing a quality design. Let's examine what a digitizer can do to assure the lowest possible stitch count without sacrificing quality.



This image shows the leaf with a blended filled background, resulting in a total design stitch count of 12,044.



Underlay (shown in black) created with light density fill and long stitch length of about 4 mm set at an angle to the top stitches.

2 Don't punch all the coverage in one layer. Find a balance of density between layers of stitches for adequate coverage – not too heavy and not too light. Underlay stitches are necessary for a strong foundation and can actually be used to aid coverage. After a base of line stitches is set down to secure the fabric, use a layer of fill for the underlay that can easily be adjusted in density and stitch length. For good coverage, find a balance of stitches in the top and under stitches.

It's tempting to digitize the entire section of the top stitches in the yellow background within one object. However, when the blended areas are divided into sections separate from those unblended, each can be set at individual densities to produce a balanced coverage. Underlay should also be set down around the perimeter of the fill to offer the edge stitches

something to “grab” onto, which then reduces stress to the fabric. At the same time, it offers coverage to the fill's outer edge. This allows for longer return stitches on the fill's edge that could become sparser when the top fill's stitch length is set at a long value to reduce stitch count. In various situations, adding a little more density to the underlay set at the longest stitch length required by the fabric allows for lightening the density of the top stitches without hurting coverage. Making these adjustments to the leaf's underlay brings the total stitch count down to 11,204.

3 If you decide to use a pattern fill, select the pattern wisely. Beware of many pattern fills that contain extremely short stitches in areas necessary to create the pattern, especially when digitizing a small design. When used in a thick density fill, these short stitches not only increase stitch count, but they can also be the cause of many sewing problems like thread breaks. When your software allows, lengthen the pattern stitches and set a longer value for a minimum short stitch length.



This image compares similar fill patterns in 38 mm square blocks. The block at the left contains 2,747 stitches, and the block at the right contains 5,604 stitches.

LEARN IT LIVE!

Get hands-on training on how to become a successful multi-decoration enterprise by attending “Make And Take: Experience Multi-Decoration From Concept to Production” on Saturday, Jan. 5, from 9 to 10:30 a.m. at The ASI Show Orlando. In this interactive session, participate in a live demonstration of a popular multi-decoration process, and each participant will leave with a sample. Topics covered include: the basics of a multi-decoration strategy and why it's so popular; common combinations of decoration media; some of the most-used decorating machines and equipment, and more. Register at ASIShow.com.

1 Choose the stitch type that will be used for each element and map a logical path with as few trims and jumps as possible. Connect the sections with run stitches that will later be covered by top stitches. The additional stitches for traveling from one point to another can be kept to a minimum by setting a value of the longest stitch length appropriate to the fabric.

Also, decide the most efficient stitch type to use. A bean stitch used for an outline is created with three stitches. Often, a double line of run stitches will be enough; it'll also eliminate a third of the stitches in the outline. Bean stitches can result in more stitches than a low-density satin stitch, especially in a small design that requires the outlining bean stitch to be shorter. When in doubt, experiment with both and choose the one with the fewest stitches that doesn't detract from the final appearance.



The artwork is a maple leaf that has a satin column roughly mapped for a column border; the stitch type of the center hasn't been determined yet.

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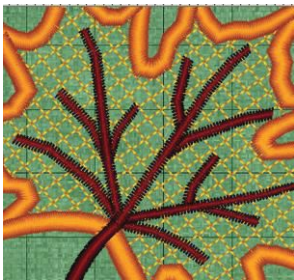
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This image shows a see-through automatic cross-stitch pattern fill of light density used to cover the leaf. A light density of basic fill stitches can also be used in two layers running at opposite angles for a manual cross-hatch pattern.

4 Choose values for stitch length and densities that offer the best results for the fabric at the lowest stitch count. Set the minimum stitch in all parameters slightly longer to eliminate unnecessary stitches. Lengthen stitches where possible, such as in the underlay run stitches and in the fill stitches. Use the right length for the right fabric; for example, a long stitch length is most suitable for knits and should be used for large elements. However, on all fabrics, retain a short stitch length for traveling under narrow columns, such as in underlay for tiny lettering.



A decorative fabric was used as an appliqué behind a see-through cross-hatch pattern for an interesting effect.

5 Appliqué, of course, will dramatically reduce your stitch count, but it can also be used as a camouflage under fills that aren't intended to be see-through. A sheet of stabilizer in the same tone of the top thread adds to coverage, and then densities of fill stitches can be reduced. Other stitch savers include cleaning up short stitches by using the auto-function now widely available in most software; finding and eliminating unnecessary automatic lock stitches; and using a 30 weight thread, which allows densities to be reduced by 15%. When you think you've finished punching, experiment by making slight adjustments in parameter values: Lengthen stitches, lighten densities, change the sewing route to eliminate traveling stitches or place them where they can also act as underlay. After adjustments were made to the maple leaf design, the total count of the design has decreased by nearly half to 6,102 stitches.

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

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2012 Power

75

Stitches reveals its third-annual list of the most powerful people and companies in the industry today. Ranked from 1-75, everyone on this list is influencing the direction the decorating industry will take in 2013 and beyond.

By Nicole Rollender, Christopher Ruvo, Cara Cherry and Alex Palmer

The decorated-apparel industry continues to evolve rapidly – especially as technology changes and improves the way decorators design, imprint, and market and sell online. From a diverse pool – equipment and software manufacturers, educators, decorators and digitizers and more – come the many individuals on the 2012 Power 75 who represent companies and organizations who are influencing the direction the industry will take in 2013 and beyond.

Welcome to the third-annual *Stitches* Power List, our ranking of 75 industry heavyweights, those with the most influence now – and into next year – over how companies operate and profit in the decorating marketplace.

Each person and company on this list is making an impact on how everyone in the industry operates – and setting a go-to-market course for the industry as it heads into 2013. Turn the page to learn who the most powerful people in the industry are, and their plans for the future. Plus, we surveyed our Power List members to gauge their outlooks on 2013, find out what their biggest challenges are and see where the best business opportunities lie. Check out their responses on page 52.

1 The Industry Leaders

Paul Gallagher and Kris Janowski

Hirsch International (*asi/14982*) took it on the chin during the Great Recession. Sales were hit hard and stock prices plummeted, compelling the company to go private. But rather than buckle, Hirsch dug in under the leadership of CEO Paul Gallagher and Kris Janowski, a long-time Hirsch executive promoted to company president this year. And these days, the industry-leading supplier of apparel decoration equipment is in a position of strength.

This year, sales of digital printing equipment were up 20%, year-over-year through October, while sales of screen-printing, embroidery and laser products also increased. The upsurge followed a 2011 in which revenue rose about 35% over the previous year. While Gallagher and Janowski have spearheaded the growth, both are quick to credit employees.

“What makes us more viable is that we have the best personnel,” Janowski says, noting Hirsch employees have more than 1,000 years of combined industry experience. “Our sales team, technicians and trainers are in front of our customers sharing information with them daily. This isn’t our work, but our passion.”

While Hirsch is best-known in embroidery circles for being the exclusive distributor of industry-leading Tajima embroidery machines in the U.S., the company has greatly diversified



Paul Gallagher



Kris Janowski

its product range to help customers compete in an age in which decorated-apparel buyers expect one-stop shopping and multiple embellishment mediums to be an option. Hirsch’s core offerings include Kornit digital printers, Pulse software, MHM screen-printing equipment and SEIT laser systems. “Since we’re one of the largest distributors in decorating apparel, Paul and I help drive the demand for new technology,” Janowski says. “At least

continued on p. 32

1. Paul Gallagher, CEO; Kris Janowski, President Hirsch International (*asi/14982*)

2011 Rank: 5

With more than 500,000 Tajima embroidery heads in operation in the U.S., Hirsch is the number-one provider of embroidery machines in the country. While Hirsch’s 35-plus-year partnership with Tajima has made it an industry leader in embroidery, Gallagher and Janowski have played leading roles in broadening the company’s offerings to include screen-printing equipment from MHM, digital printers from Kornit and Mimaki, Adelco dryers, SEIT laser systems and Pulse Software. Hirsch’s diversification puts the company at the forefront of an industry-wide trend: stitchers adding new decorating mediums to become one-stop shops for customers. Focused on innovation, this year Hirsch’s new offerings included a fresh line of MHM equipment, the Ecotex dryer from Adelco, and the Performa, a stand-alone laser with a large format that’s capable of embellishing finished caps.

2. Marty Lott, Founder and CEO SanMar (*asi/84863*)

2011 Rank: 1

In 1971, Lott started SanMar (*asi/84863*) as a college project. Over the ensuing decades, the supplier has grown under Lott’s leadership into one of the biggest apparel suppliers in the industry, with annual revenues well into the hundreds of millions. The march forward continued in 2012 when SanMar debuted two new lines. District features slim-cut, fashion-forward garments sure to please the youthful-minded, while District Made is a selection of stylish yet relaxed pieces. Not content to stop there, this year SanMar launched its new online Design Center, enhanced its website (*Sanmar.com*), and added ordering to its mobile website (*m.sanmar.com*). That commitment to constant improvement is part of why Lott and his company have earned numerous recognitions over the years, from the CEO being named ASI’s 2011 Person of Year to SanMar winning countless PPAI Gold Supplier and ASI Distributor Choice awards.

3. Ted Stahl, Executive Chairman and Founder GroupeSTAHL

2011 Rank: 2

Stahl is the head of a global group of nearly 20 companies that comprise GroupeSTAHL, the largest international manufacturer of heat-printing products and services that complement embroidery and screen printing. A decorating technology pioneer with more than 75,000 worldwide customers, GroupeSTAHL has led the way with the introduction of high-tech digital imprinting products, including Stahls’ CAD-CUT materials, Drawmate software and CADWorxlive.com, a free online art-creation website. Stahl was inducted into the Sporting Goods Industry Hall of Fame in 2011. A regular on the *Stitches* Power List since its inception, Stahl’s Decorating Fulfillment Center, a GroupeSTAHL company, was given an award by NIKEiD for helping the sportswear company surpass \$100 million in annual sales.



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twice a year, we meet directly with the R&D teams at Tajima, MHM, SEIT, Pulse and Kornit. The manufacturers respect our input about what the North American market needs.”

Recently, Hirsch’s manufacturing partners introduced a variety of new products that excited the duo. This year, at ISS Long Beach, Hirsch and Tajima debuted the Sumo, the industry’s largest single-head embroidery machine. Then, there was the brand-new line of MHM screen-printing equipment and the large-format Kornit 951 Avalanche that has higher speed and discharge as an option. Adelco, another brand Hirsch carries, introduced the more efficient Ecotex dryer, while SEIT came out with a stand-alone laser that embellishes on finished caps. “Our customers need to diversify, and we’re providing the best equipment to help them do that,” says Janowski, noting Hirsch was recognized by

Kornit and Pulse as “the number-one distributor worldwide for sales and marketing” in 2011.

To help customers even further, Hirsch is offering its new Solutions Studio, a state-of-the-art apparel-decorating technology and training center in Huntersville, N.C. “We’re excited to offer this one-of-a-kind facility that will enable Hirsch to showcase our innovative product lines and conduct R&D to help create new industry trends,” Janowski says.

Meanwhile, 2012 has been a busy year for Janowski personally. Not only did he relocate to North Carolina to be near the Solutions Studio, but his career reached a new milestone when he was promoted to the Hirsch presidency in the latter half of the year. “This promotion is intended to recognize Kris’ outstanding dedication and leadership already apparent throughout our company,” Gallagher says.

Janowski’s promotion was quite an achievement for a self-made man who escaped communist Poland in 1970, emigrated to the U.S. and assiduously worked his way to the top. Honored by the appointment, Janowski’s achievements outside the Iron Curtain have marked the realization of not only his hopes and ambitions, but also those of his parents. He says, “It was always the dream of my father and mother to get out of Poland and live in a free country.” – *Christopher Ruvo*

“Our customers need to diversify, and we’re providing the best equipment to help them do that.”

Kris Janowski, Hirsch International (*asi/14982*)

THE METHODOLOGY

This year’s Power 75 is made up of the heads of the top machine, software, thread and apparel suppliers and other industry vendors; decorators and digitizers; industry educators and heads of trade associations; others outside the industry who we felt were important; and, of course, newcomers and Power List veterans. On the following pages, you’ll find the 1-75 rankings; rankings are partially based on a survey *Stitches* conducts, which asks the industry, the Power List members themselves, and the *Stitches* Editorial Advisory Board to rate whether each person on last year’s list has gained or lost influence over the past 12 months. All of these efforts brought the list to the 75 people you see here.

- 1 **Paul Gallagher and Kris Janowski** – Hirsch International (*asi/14982*)
- 2 **Marty Lott** – SanMar (*asi/84863*)
- 3 **Ted Stahl** – GroupeSTAHL
- 4 **Mike Hoffman** – Gildan Activewear SRL
- 5 **Gerard Metrailler** – Corel Corp.
- 6 **Hitoshi Tajima** – Tajima Ltd.
- 7 **Dean F. Shulman** – Brother International Corp.
- 8 **Bill Wilson and Greg Ross** – Wilcom International Pty. and Wilcom America
- 9 **Hajo Voeller** – Madeira USA Ltd.
- 10 **Norman Hullinger** – Broder Bros. Co. (*asi/42090*)
- 11 **Tas Tsonis and Brian Goldberg** – Pulse Microsystems Ltd.
- 12 **John Fryer** – HanesBrands Imagewear Inc. (*asi/59528*)
- 13 **Craig Mertens and Jay Busselle** – Digital Art Solutions (*asi/14970*)
- 14 **Mike Rhodes** – Bodek and Rhodes (*asi/40788*)
- 15 **George Westphal** – Dakota Collectibles
- 16 **Dov Charney** – American Apparel (*asi/35297*)
- 17 **Rick Medlin** – Fruit of the Loom (*asi/84257*)
- 18 **Mike Angel** – Melco
- 19 **Jeff Adams and Paul Rohr** – S&S Activewear (*asi/84358*)
- 20 **Jimmy Lamb** – Sawgrass Technologies
- 21 **Razgo Lee** – Otto International (*asi/75350*)
- 22 **Ira Neaman** – Vantage Apparel (*asi/93390*)
- 23 **Tetsuji Yamaue and Bob Stone** – Barudan America Inc.
- 24 **Garry Hurvitz and Dominique Au-Yeung** – Ash City USA (*asi/37127*)
- 25 **Anna Wintour** – *Vogue*
- 26 **Edward Staton** – Staton Corporate and Casual (*asi/89380*)
- 27 **Susan Ritchie, Arch Ritchie and Jennifer Cox** – National Network of Embroidery Professionals (*asi/187622*)



**4. Michael Hoffman, President
Gildan Activewear SRL**
2011 Rank: 3

One of the world's largest apparel and hosiery manufacturers, Gildan recorded sales of \$1.7 billion in 2011, an approximately 31% increase over the year before. When Gildan acquired apparel maker Anvil Knitwear (*asi/36350*) this year, its share of the American wholesale market rose to about 70%, Hoffman says. Gildan also recently acquired Gold Toe Moretz Holding Corp., a leading hosiery company. Known for its T-shirts, sports shirts and fleece apparel, Gildan this year introduced 28 new colors and 12 new styles and expanded its range of size offerings in existing styles, among other enhancements. Continuously lauded for its commitment to fair, efficient and value-driven manufacturing, the Montreal-headquartered company's latest recognition came in June when it was included on the highly prestigious list of Canada's Top 50 Most Socially Responsible Corporations as rated by *Maclean's* magazine.



5. Gerard Metrailler, Senior Director, Product Manager, Graphics Corel Corp.
2011 Rank: 8

With more than 100 million users across the globe, CorelDRAW is top dog when it comes to graphics software applications in the apparel market. In March, Metrailler and his Corel team launched CorelDRAW Graphics Suite X6, which provides new time-saving, design-enhancing features, including a tool for modifying colors collectively and applications that empower users to refine and add effects to vector artwork. Also this year, Corel introduced PaintShop ProX5, the most robust consumer photo-editing and creative design solution on the market.



**6. Hitoshi Tajima, President
Tajima Industries Ltd.**
New

While Tajima is the number-one embroidery machine provider in the U.S., the Japan-based company also exports machines to more than 100 countries. Having produced more than 1,000 different models over the years, Tajima kept the innovations coming in 2012 under Tajima's leadership, introducing new offerings like the TWMX-C1501. Nicknamed the Sumo,

the model is the largest single-head embroidery machine in the industry. While competition is always fierce, Hitoshi Tajima is confident that customer-focused service and Tajima's extensive line of machines - from the advanced TFGN series to its extremely popular collections of single- and multi-heads - will keep the company a cut above the rest.



7. Dean F. Shulman, Senior Vice President Home Appliance and Industrial Products Divisions, Brother International Corp.

2011 Rank: 10

Seven years ago, Brother asked Shulman to reinvent its sewing and embroidery business. Since then, he's led Brother not only in new, innovative products, but in marketing and customer service as well. Under his direction, Brother's sewing and embroidery business has grown more than 20%, with the company selling 1.6 million units into American households over the last three years. Also offering digital garment printers, decorating software solutions and other products, Brother continued the innovation this year under Shulman, launching the GraffiTee Series of digital printers, which can print both CMYK and white ink and perform one-pass simultaneous printing for higher productivity.

28 Daniel Tsai and Jennifer Tsai - Tri-Mountain (*asi/92125*)

29 Martin Kristiaman - DecoNetwork

30 Mark Wasson - Gunold USA

31 Scott Colman and Linda Shahvaran - ColDesi Inc.

32 Dick Ward - River's End Trading Co. (*asi/82588*)

33 Rick Mouty - Profill Holdings (*asi/300152*)

34 Gene Feil - Dalco Athletic

35 Natural Resources

36 Ray Titus - EmbroidMe (*asi/384000*)

37 Phil Rubin and Eric Rubin - Blue Generation (*asi/40653*)

38 Owen Dunne - American & Efid Inc.

39 Josh Peyser - MV Sport/Weatherproof (*asi/68318*)

40 Greg Nathanson and Chase Roh, Ph.D. - AnaJet Inc. (*asi/16000*)

41 Richard Hirsch - Amann USA

42 Joyce Jagger - The Embroidery Coach

43 Ryan Moor - Ryonet Corp.

44 Gary Schultz - Edwards Garment Co. (*asi/51752*)

45 John P. Colman - Pantograms Manufacturing Co. Inc.

46 Scott M. Ritter - SMR Software, Inc. and Decorated Apparel Expo (DAX)

47 Ed Levy - Hirsch International

48 Jackson Burnett and Christopher Bernat - Vapor Apparel (*asi/93396*)

49 Jens Petersson - Cutter & Buck (*asi/47965*)

50 Dale Call - Virginia T's (*asi/93917*)

51 Niamh O'Connor - UrbanThreads.com

52 Michael Robertson - Specialty Graphic Imaging Association

53 Chris Waldick - Fast Manager SMS

54 Lee Caroselli Barnes - Balboa Threadworks

55 Akira Ikeda - Mimaki Engineering

56 Mark Venit and Jay Malanga - Shopworks

57 Steven Jeffery and Ken Tacony - Baby Lock USA and Tacony Corp.

58 Daniel Fucci - Sierra Technology Group

59 Steve Garnier - Epilog Laser

60 Eric Withaar - Sportco Inc. (*asi/88792*)

61 Mitchell Fersten - Fersten Worldwide (*asi/53974*)

62 Paul Ashworth - Bernina of America

63 Deborah Jones - Myembroiderymentor.com

64 Erich Campbell - Black Duck Inc.

65 Kristine Shreve - EnMart and Ensign Emblem

66 Jesse, Charlie and Maggie Mack - Midwest Products/Hoop Master

67 Vasilis Thomaidis - Compucon

68 Kate Middleton - Duchess of Cambridge

69 Randy Carr - World Emblem International (*asi/98264*)

70 Frank Ma - Ricoma International Corp.

71 Joanna Grant - Affinity Express

72 Manuel Cuevas - Manuel Couture

73 Michael Savoia - Villa Savoia Inc.

74 Jenny Hart - Sublime Stitching

75 Tony Diao - Topshow Outdoor Product Co. Ltd.



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power 75

2 Apparel King Marty Lott



As founder and CEO of SanMar (*asi/84863*), which he has run since 1971, Marty Lott has gotten very comfortable with change. That includes changes to the company's offerings, such as its recent enhancements to Sanmar.com, as well as new ordering capabilities on its mobile site.

It also includes changes to the industry as a whole. "The one guarantee for 2013 is that there will be change," says Lott, pointing to the U.S. election and its impact on the business landscape, plus international events. "What happens in Greece or Spain impacts our industry and the U.S. economy," Lott says. "When the Chinese government buys cotton, the cost of a T-shirt goes up."



Greg Ross

8. Bill Wilson, Chief Technical Officer and Co-Founder, Wilcom International; Greg Ross, President Wilcom America

2011 Rank: 4

Wilcom retains a top spot on the Power 75 list for its innovative software for all decoration types, including embroidery, direct-to-garment printing, screen printing, laser cutting, rhinestones and more. The company, founded in 1979, recently introduced Elements 2, integrated with graphic design software CorelDRAW, while also launching two new product levels for its EmbroideryStudio: Lettering and Editing. Customer training remains a priority for both Wilson and Ross, with the company offering all variety of education to its more than 250,000 license holders worldwide, in the form of print material, pre-recorded classes, live online courses, and in-person workshops at Wilcom America's Atlanta offices.



9. Hajo Voeller, President and CEO Madeira USA Ltd.

2011 Rank: 11

Founded in Freiburg, Germany, in 1919, Madeira is a global leader producing the industry's largest collection of

specialty threads for embroidery. Led by Voeller, Madeira has made a strong commitment to the environment and ensures that its manufacturing processes are free from harmful chemicals - this earned Madeira an Oeko-Tex certificate. In response to customer requests, Madeira also created a shopping cart application for use with smartphones, and opened a new fulfillment center. The company also added more videos to its online training library this year, and offered its first webinar.



10. Norman Hullinger, Interim CEO Broder Bros. Co.

(*asi/42090*)

2011 Rank: 9

An executive at Broder Bros. since 2003, Hullinger was named interim CEO in August, having previously served as executive vice president and chief operating officer. A former vice president at Yahoo!, Hullinger, who took over for Tom Myers, has grabbed hold of the reins at a time of growth and success. Broder Bros. - the parent company of the Alpha Shirt (*asi/34408*), Broder, and NES (*asi/72808*) brands - is the largest supplier in the ad specialty market, ranking number one on *Counselor* magazine's list of Top 40 suppliers and *Stitches*' 2012 list of Top 25 Apparel Suppliers. In 2011, Broder's revenue rose to \$848.2 million, a 72% increase over 2010 net sales. This year, Broder introduced 170 new apparel styles, added three new brands, introduced a freight savings program called Flex Express Pickup, and

“The one guarantee for 2013 is that there will be change.”

Marty Lott, SanMar (*asi/84863*)

To succeed in constant flux, Lott puts a premium on staying flexible and willing to adapt to change. SanMar recently added several new brands to its catalog, including Eddie Bauer, First Ascent and Russell Outdoors. Lott sees the apparel industry going in exciting directions. “There are a lot of innovations going into product and fabric technologies that are filtering into what goes to customers,” he says.

“Things are becoming warmer, faster and drier than five years ago, and we expect to see more of those product evolutions and enhancements.”

Lott has worked to ensure SanMar’s decorator and distributor customers stay at the forefront of these changes in product offerings, providing training to customers on how to best use and experience the company’s tools and technology. For example, after revamping Sanmar.com, the company sent e-mails to customers highlighting its new features, along with tips on how to maximize their online experience. The company supplemented this with a technology booth the team took to several major trade shows, offering impromptu overviews of new

tools, including mobile ordering and a Design Center.

According to Lott, one of the biggest current market trends is end-buyers’ and users’ rising expectations for the same apparel styling, fit and performance to be available at retail and wholesale. With technology developments, customer expectations have also risen around turn-around times. Lott gives the analogy of how in the past decade, consumers have gone from driving to a bookstore for a particular title, to being able to instantly download it on an e-reader. “There’s a similar mindset of instant gratification around time-to-market expectations for products,” Lott says. “So, if you run a business, be ready for change.” – *Alex Palmer*

continued work on its Selling What Sells education series, which offers training in promotional apparel sales.



Tas Tsonis

11. Tas Tsonis and Brian Goldberg, Co-CEOs Pulse Microsystems Ltd.

2011 Rank: 7



Brian Goldberg

Led by Tsonis and Goldberg, Pulse continues to be the dominant software solutions provider to top apparel-decorating machine manufacturers – including Tajima, Brother and Kornit – and services a large and diverse customer base worldwide. Technology created by Pulse is used by leading companies such as Lids, Thirty-One Gifts, Lands’ End, Nike, Adidas, eBay, the New York Yankees, Cintas, World Emblem (*asi/98264*) and Penn Emblem (*asi/62485*). As the trend toward automated embroidery production grew this year, Pulse led the way in providing automation solutions that integrate into a company’s existing infrastructure and handle the production process from order entry to sewing of designs. Relatedly, Pulse’s online Kiosk solution integrates directly into corporate websites, enabling companies to offer customized apparel design creation and

visualization online, while generating designs that can be sent to the machine immediately.



12. John Fryer, General Manager HanesBrands Branded Printwear (*asi/59528*)

2011 Rank: 6

In May, HanesBrands announced that it’s exiting the private-label business in the U.S. and divesting its Outer Banks brand. As part of the restructuring, Hanes renamed its Imagewear division HanesBrands Branded Printwear, which is focused solely on Hanes and Champion branded products in America. As general manager of Branded Printwear, Fryer has played a leading role in guiding the company through a year of significant change while forging an exclusive partnership with Box Tops for Education. As a division of the \$4.6 billion HanesBrands Inc., Branded Printwear is a major supplier of T-shirts, sport shirts and fleece, with its Hanes Cool Dri T-shirt being the number-one polyester performance tee in the printwear market, according to Crest Data. The Champion brand, meanwhile, is the second-biggest athletic apparel brand in the U.S. by units sold. Hanes this year introduced a variety of new apparel items, including the Hanes ComfortBlend EcoSmart line and the Champion Eco Fleece.

13. Craig Mertens, President and CEO; Jay Busselle, General Manager

Digital Art Solutions (*asi/14970*)

2011 Rank: 13

Top industry trainers, Mertens and Busselle are familiar faces on the trade show circuit and over the past few years have trained more than 10,000 companies on multi-decoration techniques. Together they work to identify areas where clients are struggling, and they create product-focused solutions that assist them in building successful decorating businesses. In 2012, they added several software packages and products to their diverse product line, as well as the Campus Apparel Marketing Program. The program combines printed catalogs, design templates, and training for school and team markets. In addition, they formed a strategic partnership with DecoNetwork Pty. Ltd. for online design services and Web-based interactive design templates.



14. Mike Rhodes, President and CEO Bodek and Rhodes (*asi/40788*)

2011 Rank: 12

Rhodes is president of Bodek and Rhodes, a family-owned national wholesaler that carries more

3 Heat-Printing Icon Ted Stahl



Somewhere, the late A.C. Stahl is smiling at the achievements of his grandson, Ted Stahl – at the success Ted, founder and executive chairman of the board, has had in growing GroupeSTAHL into a global organization of nearly 20 companies dedicated to manufacturing and selling the best in heat-printing materials, machines and services.

A.C. Stahl laid the seeds for that success back in 1932 when he invented the concept of heat-applied printing. His grandson has run with it, becoming a true industry icon. In addition to holding 50 patents/patents-pending for equipment and materials used in custom garment decoration, the younger Stahl's influence is so extensive that he has coined terms that have become common phrases among garment printers worldwide. "Heat printing" may be the words for which he's most famous. "All of our products are applied with heat, so it wasn't a stretch to call what we do heat printing," Stahl says.

As the bevy of patents suggests, however, his industry-defining influence extends far beyond words. Stahl's companies have invented products like Thermo-FILM, a lightweight polyurethane film that's the world's leading material for athletic jersey personalization. GroupeSTAHL was the first company to take the concept of cutting graphics for jerseys on-demand mainstream with the introduction of its CAD-CUT technology and materials, which empower sporting goods stores to cut and apply custom player names, numbers and logos in-house as demand dictates. The inventor of water-jet technology for custom-cutting twill, Stahl and the dedicated employees he leads have also played a leading role in bring-

brands of imprintable activewear than any other supplier in the industry. Under his leadership, the company has received numerous awards and accolades, including T-shirt Supplier of the Year by *Promo Marketing* readers for three years running. The supplier also became QEC certified this year. Well-known for offering customer-focused tools, Rhodes developed a mobile version of the company website and then followed it up by offering a free custom mobile site that allows customers to create their own apparel website featuring Bodek and Rhodes' products without mentioning the wholesaler by name.

15. George Westphal, Co-Founder and CEO Dakota Collectibles

2011 Rank: 22

Westphal and his twin brother Jerry founded Dakota in 1988, with a determination to make customer service a top priority, and almost 25 years later that continues to drive the company

as it has become the world's largest supplier of stock embroidery. The company offers thousands of unique designs, including licensed collections from the likes of Hautman Brothers and Maxine, with new collections regularly introduced, such as the recent "Paw Portraits" and "Delicate Wings." Online instructional videos walk customers through everything from border designs to lace doilies and Christmas mittens.



16. Dov Charney, CEO American Apparel (asi/35297)

2011 Rank: 14

An undeniable trendsetter, Charney leads a vertically-integrated manufacturer of fashion-forward apparel that has the single-best brand recognition in the industry. While whispers of bankruptcy circulated after a 2010 in which American Apparel recorded an \$86 million loss, the resilient company has rebounded. The ad specialty

industry's 16th largest supplier, American Apparel's North American promotional products revenue increased to \$90.2 million in 2011. Under Charney's leadership, the positive momentum continued this year, as the Los Angeles-based clothier reported net sales gains of 14%, 13% and 15% in each of the first three quarters, respectively. The increases included rises of 17%, 10% and 6% in wholesale business.

17. Rick Medlin, President and CEO Fruit of the Loom (asi/84257)

New

This apparel and sporting good giant's Jerzees Activewear sub-brand refreshed its fleece offerings this year, with products like the NuBlend pullover sweatshirts and full- or quarter-zip hoodies. Its Fruit Activewear offers its special Lofteez and garment-dyed products, through more than 20 distributor partners. Medlin has made it a priority to put sustainability at the center of the company's manufacturing efforts, reducing its use of water and energy.

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ing sportswear graphics into the 21st century by introducing high-tech digital imprinting products beyond CAD-CUT, including Drawmate software and CadworxLive.com, the industry's first free (for GroupeSTAHL customers) online art-creation software that outputs designs directly to cutters.

All that innovation has translated into major success. The largest manufacturer of heat presses in the world, GroupeSTAHL has a database of more than 75,000 customers across the globe. On a given day during busy season, GroupeSTAHL companies in the U.S. often ship more than 2,500 packages. "We've seen tremendous sales increases this year division-wide. Our sales continue to grow and break internal records even during recent economically challenged times," says Stahl, whose products are used by high-profile clientele. For example, GroupeSTAHL is a licensed garment graphics supplier to the National Basketball Association, National Hockey League, and Major League Baseball – and the company's specialty heat-print materials were featured on Olympic uniforms for gymnasts and track-and-field athletes at the 2012 Summer Games in London.

While that success has translated into numerous accolades for Stahl, he remains tirelessly committed to helping his customers succeed. That's why he's made education a top priority. For over 20 years, Stahls' has been hosting hands-on workshops that teach everything you need to know about heat printing. The seminars – some now in Spanish – continue today, but the educators at GroupeSTAHL can now reach thousands more thanks to online webinars. Further advancing education with digital-age tools, Stahl writes a widely-read blog, Let's Talk About Heat Printing, while his company's YouTube channels, which have more than 3 million hits, feature how-to heat print videos. Says Stahl: "We want people to know that there's more than one way to print a T-shirt, and more than one way to add a custom logo." – CR

This effort has dovetailed with Medlin's efforts to streamline operations across all business divisions in the past two years, striving for supply-chain transparency by partnering with organizations like the Fair Labor Association and Fundemas.

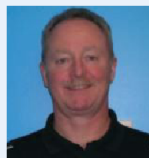


18. Mike Angel, Vice President of Sales and Marketing Melco

2011 Rank: 15

Melco has been an industry leader in manufacturing industrial embroidery machines and digitizing software since 1972 and is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. Under Angel's guidance, Melco has continued to increase market share year after year and grow its major brand clientele. This year, the company was proud to announce that NIKEiD selected Melco's online personalization solution, LiveDesigner Fusion, to assist in the ordering process for creating personalized footwear. In addition, Rolls Royce has purchased the AMAYA

XTS, a commercial modular featuring a single-head machine with networkable multi-heads, to embroider the leather upholstery in its luxury vehicles.



Jeff Adams

19. Jeff Adams and Paul Rohr, Principals S&S Activewear

(asi/84358)

2011 Rank: 18



Paul Rohr

This national apparel wholesaler continues to add to the 60 brands it currently stocks, most recently with Calvin Klein, Boxercraft and Sublivie. The company has maintained a steady increase in sales revenue since being purchased by Adams and Rohr in March 2010 and ranked fifth on *Stitches'* 2012 Top 25 Apparel Suppliers biggest-growth list, with an 8% rise to \$140.4 million. Its products run the gamut, including T-shirts, fleece, sport shirts, hats, bags, aprons and more, all shipped from the company's

single massive warehouse in Bolingbrook, IL. S&S has moved quickly to incorporate a range of organic and recycled offerings to its catalog.



20. Jimmy Lamb, Manager of Education and Communications Sawgrass Technologies

2011 Rank: 26

Lamb has long been a well-known figure in the decorated-apparel industry. With more than 20 years of experience, he's considered one of the foremost authorities on embroidery, sublimation and digital printing. He's a regular speaker at industry trade shows and is also an award-winning author. At Sawgrass, which provides digital printing solutions for customizing consumer products, Lamb has played a key role in developing a strong educational program, which includes videos on-demand, live webinars, seminars and workshops. Lamb interfaces with a variety of companies and markets on a daily basis, which has allowed him to deliver innovative solutions and be a part of many exciting advancements in digital decorating.

21. Razgo Lee, President Otto International (asi/75350)

2011 Rank: 45

Lee oversees this increasingly popular manufacturer of premium headwear and apparel, which services its more than 30,000 customers out of three distribution centers in California, Texas and Georgia. Otto recently launched its new Custom Retail Program, which offers private labeling and decorating services, as well as a team of creative designers to help clients develop and execute custom retail projects. The company was number 22 on *Stitches'* 2012 list of Top 25 Apparel Suppliers, bringing in \$26 million in revenue for 2011, 2% growth over 2010.



22. Ira Neaman, President Vantage Apparel

(asi/93390)

2011 Rank: 19

An award-winning supplier of corporate branded apparel, Vantage Apparel delivers high-quality garments and headwear from proprietary labels to top-tier retail brands. Under Neaman's leadership, the company has consistently added new decorating techniques to its offerings. New additions include high-tech decorating options for performance apparel and

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13

Multi-Decoration Mavens Craig Mertens and Jay Busselle

Making it easier for their customers to run their businesses is Digital Art Solutions' (*asi/42090*) top priority, according to Craig Mertens, owner, and Jay Busselle, general manager, of the digital template and software provider. With more than 60,000 customers, Mertens and Busselle are laser-focused on rolling out new offerings and working to raise the quality of their existing ones.

DAS' diverse products include software and graphics systems such as sign and rhinestone software and production-ready digital art, as well as decoration systems such as professional vinyl cutters and heat presses.

"We continue to research decoration trends and build software and digital art content that allows anyone with a computer to compete at the highest level with the newest decoration trends," says Busselle, pointing to a new offering that bundles a sub-\$10,000 direct-to-garment printer with DAS' simple software system. "To be at

fashion-forward laser patch decorating as well as distressed art techniques and soft-hand screen-print inks for vintage styles. Vantage also realigned its customer service department to establish regional teams or "PODS" to better serve customers. Each POD includes associates from various departments, which allows multiple associates to be familiar with each account.



Tetsuji Yamaue

23. Tetsuji Yamaue, CEO
Barudan;
Bob Stone, Vice President
Barudan America Inc.
2011 Rank: 17



Bob Stone

Manufacturing embroidery equipment from single- to 56-head machines, Barudan puts a premium on reliability in its products, which it backs up with its "5-3-2 Warranty" (five years for the main motor, three on electronic parts, and two on everything else). The company has eight offices worldwide, including its Barudan America headquarters in Solon, OH, overseen by Stone. Yamaue has also ensured that the company looks out for industry newbies, with the Embroidery Startup Program, complete with needles, bobbins,

scissors, backing and more for any embroiderer who purchases one of the company's machines and software.



Garry Hurvitz

24. Garry Hurvitz, President and CEO;
Dominique Au-Yeung, Executive Vice President
Ash City USA
(asi/37127)



Dominique Au-Yeung

2011 Rank: 16

Founded in 1977, this corporate ad specialty retail supplier continues to evolve in its eco- and fashion-friendly offerings. In March, the company launched a new e-commerce website with an upgraded Premium Flyer Creator,

Virtual Sample Logoizer, and 360-degree viewer allowing customers to practically reach out and touch their product before placing an order. Led by Hurvitz and Au-Yeung, Ash City was up double digits year-over-year in 2011 with \$135 million in annual sales, placing sixth on *Stitches'* 2012 Top 25 Apparel Suppliers list. Thanks to the company's ambitious global efforts, Hurvitz was named International Person of the Year by *Counselor* in 2012.



Craig Mertens



Jay Busselle

“To be at almost any event and print on-site with a simple turnkey solution will be a big part of our future growth.”

Jay Busselle, Digital Art Solutions (*asi/42090*)

almost any event and print on-site with a simple turnkey solution will be a big part of our future growth.”

While the vendor has enjoyed revenue growth for the past five years, particularly in its rhinestone systems, consumables and direct-to-garment printers, Mertens and his management team continue product

innovation at a rapid pace. DAS recently launched a major upgrade to its multi-decoration rhinestone software StoneCut, and also enhanced its Smart Designer add-on software.

According to the duo, the biggest trend they’re seeing really grow at the decorator level has been the merging of mul-

iple decoration strategies – what they call multi-decoration. “Of course, the concept has been around for a long time, but started to catch fire in 2008,” Busselle says. Now, with affordable tools, “it helps decorators create an increase in personalization, which results in an increase in profits.” – AP



25. Anna Wintour, Editor-in-Chief
Vogue

2011 Rank: 20

Wintour continues to serve as fashion tastemaker-in-chief, through the styles and trends showcased each month in *Vogue*, including a greater embrace of embroideries and appliqué. She’s also worked to make elite fashion more accessible through programs like Fashion’s Night Out, and at the end of 2011, *Vogue* put its entire archive online, allowing embroiderers to draw inspiration not only from the latest issue, but from styles dating back 120 years. Wintour was also recently awarded the 51st spot on *Forbes*’ list of the year’s most powerful women.

26. Edward Staton, President
Staton Corporate and Casual

(*asi/89380*)

2011 Rank: 21

This sportswear supplier rose to the seventh spot on *Stitches*’ 2012 Top 25 Apparel Suppliers list, thanks to a 4.8% jump in its revenue for 2011, enjoying \$122.6 million in annual sales. Staton himself strives to ensure the company he founded 31 years ago continues to bring its now more than 16,500 distributor and decorator customers high-

quality products from brands like Anvil Knitwear, Dickies Occupational and Hanes. He also works to keep his employees happy, and last year the company earned a spot on the *Dallas Morning News*’ Top 100 Places to Work list.

27. Jennifer Cox, Susan Ritchie and Arch Ritchie, Co-Founders
National Network of Embroidery Professionals (NNEP)

(*asi/187622*)

2011 Rank: 35

NNEP was founded in 1996 and has focused on providing new embroidery business owners with a place to ask questions, get information and obtain the support they need to help their businesses grow ever since. The NNEP currently serves nearly 1,600 apparel-decorating business owners with more than \$64 million in annual sales collectively. The family team recently launched the NNEP Exchange, which is a member-to-member online forum where apparel decorators can connect at any time with their peers in a non-competitive setting. NNEP also hosts an Embroidery Trade Show in the spring and Embroidery Mart in the summer in Nashville.



Daniel Tsai

28. Daniel Tsai, Owner;
Jennifer Tsai, Vice President of
Operations

Tri-Mountain (*asi/92125*)

2011 Rank: 34



Jennifer Tsai

A leading supplier of imprintable apparel, Tri-Mountain (*asi/92125*) has received several top supplier awards and in 2011 was considered one of the best places to work by *Counselor* magazine. Tri-Mountain carries a range of apparel including corporate wear, team wear and safety wear across five brand lines. The Tsais added more than 200 new styles for 2012, nearly doubling their product offering while providing fresh and trendy styles at value price points. They’re currently evaluating trends for 2013, and they plan to introduce more than 100 new styles in the coming year.



29. Martin Kristiaman, CEO
DecoNetwork Pty Ltd.

New

Under Kristiaman’s astute leadership, DecoNetwork’s 2012 press

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27 Family Affair Jennifer Cox, Susan Ritchie and Arch Richie

Sometimes, you don't know what direction life is going to take you. In 1989, Jennifer Cox was carving a successful career at Ohio State University, working in the continuing education program, when her parents asked her if she wanted to launch an embroidery business.

While Susan and Arch Ritchie saw huge potential, Cox initially declined. Nonetheless, her persistent parents convinced her to attend an embroidery conference with them in Columbus, OH. The trip changed Cox's life. "I fell in love with the industry," she says. "That Monday, I went in and gave my two weeks' notice."

Cox has never regretted her decision. Along with her parents, she co-founded the National Network of Embroidery Professionals, a commercial embroidery industry support and education organization with members across all 50 states. The president and public face of NNEP, Cox plays a leading role in the membership association, which hosts conferences and trade shows (like Embroidery Mart), offers extensive sourcing resources, and provides business consulting on everything from pricing and marketing to customer retention, decoration technique, and even ethical issues. "I love helping business owners have that 'a-ha! moment,'" Cox says.

After entering the industry 23 years ago, Cox and her parents ran a successful stitching shop, Designs on You, with revenue doubling annually through the early years as staff and machines were added. But in 1995, the business plateaued. Wanting to become a million-dollar-a-year enterprise, however, Cox sought mentoring from stitching companies that were already having seven-figure success. She didn't get much. Still, that

"I love helping business owners have that 'a-ha! moment.'"

Jennifer Cox, National Network of Embroidery Professionals
(asi/187622)

time sales revenue was 2.5 to 3 times greater than the year before. The rapid rise followed a significant shift in December, when Wilcom and PikiCentral, the company that invented the DecoNetwork product, agreed to integrate all related intellectual property and the sales/marketing team behind DecoNetwork into PikiCentral, which was renamed DecoNetwork Pty. Ltd. Buoyed by this year's growth, Kristiaman sees a bright future for DecoNetwork, a cloud-based e-commerce and business management solution through which decorators can deliver mass personalization to customers. "To date, we've been working with over 600 fulfillment centers with over 12,000 Web stores, but we believe this number will exponentially multiply," he says, noting DecoNetwork's recent upgrades include BusinessHub - a new business management concept that allows decorators to set their

product catalog, decoration pricing and margins, cost factors and more.

30. Mark Wasson, President Gunold USA 2011 Rank: 51

Wasson continues to guide this 85-year-old embroidery supplies and software business (which produces such offerings as water-soluble embroidery topping Solvy and spray adhesive KK100) and strengthen the industry at large. This year, Gunold rolled out a library of free, regularly updated embroidery education videos on the company website, and Wasson launched a program of sponsored scholarships. The company's sales have grown at a brisk 20% annually for the past several years, which Wasson attributes to



Jennifer Cox



Susan Ritchie



Arch Ritchie

setback led to another eureka moment in the lives of Cox and her family. “We determined there might be a need for a constructive industry infrastructure,” Cox says. She and her parents became eager to fill this gap.

After conducting a national survey of industry publications and embroidery businesses, Cox and her parents created a membership association for the industry. After input from legal counsel, NNEP was born. The organization’s first event was held on June 21, 1996, in Richfield, OH. About 70 companies attended, and enthusiastic embroiderers started signing up for the new association that day. Now, NNEP serves almost 800 businesses, representing more than 1,500 embroidery and apparel decoration professionals; the association fields 5,300 calls and responds to some 4,200 e-mails each year from NNEP members.

Long ago, Cox shuttered the embroidery business and transferred customers to other shops, allowing the family to focus full-time on NNEP. From their vantage point, they’re uniquely positioned to evaluate some of the major issues facing the industry. One of its biggest challenges is an aging demographic, Cox says. “We need to attract more young people into the business to take over for the baby boomers who are moving on,” she says.

While Cox has seen many changes and challenges confront the commercial embroidery industry over the last two decades, she remains confident that savvy shops will continue to thrive. “The desire to brand and promote through messages on apparel isn’t going away,” Cox says. “Even in downtime, people still wear logoed apparel. It’s a need embroiderers can meet for years to come.” – CR

Gunold’s responsiveness to its customers, introducing offerings like free shipping and a low minimum order, monthly product specials, and a new rapid ordering feature on the company’s website.

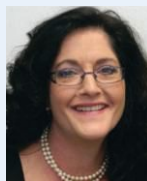


Scott Colman

31. Scott Colman, President; Linda Shahvaran, General Manager ColDesi Inc.

2011 Rank: 33

ColDesi became the exclusive supplier of DTG direct-to-garment printers and CAMS automated rhinestone setters in North America last year. This year, it acquired Rapid



Linda Shahvaran

Label Systems, a national apparel decorating supplier. Under the leadership of Colman with the assistance of Shahvaran, who has been with ColDesi since it was founded in 1999, the company has increased sales, and now supplies more than 10,000 customers with apparel-decorating equipment, services and solutions. ColDesi is also the largest distributor of SWF Embroidery machines in the world. Most recently, ColDesi partnered with DecoNetwork Pty. Ltd. to help customers build their own online storefronts and business-management systems.



32. Dick Ward, CEO and President River’s End Trading Co. (asi/82588)

2011 Rank: 25

Under Ward’s guidance, this apparel supplier has seen steadily increasing sales over the past few years, with 2011 revenue of \$94.6 million and some 10,000 accounts. Now offering 15 brands including PING Apparel, Lacoste and Jockey, in 2012 River’s End also added Brooks Brothers to its name-brand portfolio, and in 2013, it’ll be the only supplier to offer Columbia. For its own River’s End brand, the company designed and manufactured a new battery-powered heated jacket in 2012, and also introduced the new River’s End SPORT line of T-shirts and polos with temperature-controlling CoolMatrix technology.



33. Rick Mouty, CEO Profill Holdings (asi/300152)

2011 Rank: 27

A *Counselor* magazine Top 40 Supplier, this provider of blanks and turnkey apparel packages has also been honored locally with the Deloitte Cincinnati USA 100 distinction and Greater Cincinnati Fast 55. The company, whose subsidiaries include TSC Apparel (asi/90518) and WearMagic (asi/95765), saw revenue grow to more than \$100 million last year, as it has enjoyed steady organic growth since it was formed by the current ownership in 2001. In the past two years, Mouty has overseen the launch of direct-to-garment printing for smaller orders, as well as an appliqué laser bridge, expanding Profill’s (asi/300152) design capabilities and catalog offerings.



34. Gene Feil, President Dalco Athletic

2011 Rank: 30

In 1969, Feil was working at a sporting goods store selling jerseys and T-shirts. Many of his customers wanted custom letters and numbers, and when he couldn’t find them, he decided to make them himself. He started in his garage with screen printing and soon added die-cut lettering that could be heat-applied. Since then, Feil has continued to pioneer innovations in the manufacturing of lettering products for the sports and decorated-apparel industry. In 2012, Dalco has launched various new digital-decorating options featuring dye-sublimation – the supplier now offers a complete collection that includes appliqué, heat-sealable athletic and Greek letters, and patches.

35. Natural Resources

2011 Rank: 29

The cost of cotton and oil has an unavoidable impact on the price of manufacturing and shipping garments and apparel-decorating supplies. After the per-pound cost of cotton soared through late 2010 into 2011, for example, the price of some apparel items increased. The positive news on cotton is that, as of the autumn press time, the average per-pound cost was 84 cents, down vastly from the March 2011 record high of about \$2.30. Analysts say the price could remain low or drop further as worldwide demand tapers and stockpiles approach record levels.

Similarly, shipping costs and the price of some polyester items – made from petroleum-based polyester yarn – rose in recent years as oil prices skyrocketed. While \$100-per-barrel costs for oil sent fuel costs soaring in the latter half of 2012, some analysts predict that oil's price will decrease significantly next year, dropping to between \$65 and \$70 per barrel. While possible price declines in cotton and oil could result in the products decorators buy one day costing less, it ultimately remains to be seen how apparel, supply and shipping prices will be affected next year.

36. Ray Titus, CEO EmbroidMe (asi/384000)

2011 Rank: 28

From its more than 300 franchise stores in 12 countries, EmbroidMe (asi/384000) delivers embroidery, printed apparel, promotional products, screen printing, personalized gifts and more to over 400,000 clients. In 2011, the franchiser's North American revenues shot up 17%, rising to \$82.7 million. This year, EmbroidMe introduced a new global proprietary point of sale and accounting system that includes eCommerce company stores. Also in 2012, EmbroidMe placed 19th on *Counselor* magazine's annual list of the industry's Top 40 distributors, while ranking 97th on Franchise Direct's list of Top 100 Global Franchises. The company is also expanding into five Central American countries.



Phil Rubin

37. Phil Rubin, CEO; Eric Rubin, President Blue Generation

(asi/40653)

2011 Rank: 31



Eric Rubin

It all started with a blue denim shirt, and 69 years later, Blue Generation carries more than 60 color combinations in a wide range of sizes, styles and materials. Whether ordering uniforms for the mailroom or

30 Educating the Industry Mark Wasson



Mark Wasson (center) and Edge (right) help Joyce Sullivan of Classic Monograms with a unique embroidery project.

Over the last several years, Gunold USA Inc. has grown sales about 20% annually. Mark Wasson, the company president and CEO who has spearheaded that success, says the gains are the result of Gunold being hyper-focused on customers' most pressing needs. "It's about meeting their demands at every turn," Wasson says.

One way Gunold, a top supplier of embroidery thread and supplies, has responded to customers is by ramping up its education offerings. "We really listened to our customers, and what they asked for is education," Wasson says. In 2010, he introduced Gunold's Learn & Touch embroidery workshops, taught by embroidery expert, author and instructor Deborah Jones. The program centers on seminars that offer a maximum of 25 participants – kept at that level to ensure a high-quality experience for all – instruction in everything from embroidery tips and techniques to machine repair and digitizing.

This year, Gunold began posting free embroidery education videos on its website. "We add two to four videos each month," Wasson says. "We want Gunold to be known as the best place to go for embroidery education, whether at our educational workshops and seminars, through free online videos, or simply by picking up the phone and calling us."

“To stay still in this day and age for us or for anyone is a mistake. We’ve really moved into other areas because like-minded designers can handle a wide range of capabilities.”

Mark Wasson, Gunold USA Inc.

By providing great education, Gunold builds a relationship of trust with embroiderers, who in turn may be more apt to come to Gunold when they need thread and other supplies, Wasson says. Given that the revenue rises of recent years have coincided with Gunold’s intense commitment to education, it’s hard to argue with that logic. Of course, it’s not just education that has contributed to Gunold’s success. Customer service is another key element. “Our online shopping cart sales are going crazy because we designed the site around customers’ requests,” says Wasson, who notes Gunold also responded proactively after learning shipping costs were an issue for many shops. “Customers asked for and are receiving free shipping with a very low minimum order of only \$75 by any major credit card.”

Beyond service and education, Gunold has over the years introduced products that have become industry standards, like the original embroidery spray adhesive KK-100 and Solvy, the original water-soluble topping, for which Wasson obtained the trademark. In addition, Wasson is excited about the recent introduction of new offerings, including Cover the Back, a polyester circular knit mesh product with a polyamid adhesive coating that covers the backside of an embroidered piece to prevent it from irritating skin. Then there’s ActionBack, a cut-away woven fabric backing made to stabilize stretchy, difficult-to-embroider materials – like performance wear. “It’s a total solution for working on a popular type of apparel that can be difficult,” Wasson says.

Committed to promoting the industry as well, Wasson designed and rolled out a program this year to educate the next generation of embroiderers. The initiative centers on providing scholarships for students to study embroidery at select universities. Western Kentucky University was the first institution to take part. “We want to encourage embroidery as an art and interest young people in the industry,” Wasson says. – CR

providing board members with contemporary logo wear, this company has something for everyone. Under the Rubins’ leadership, sales figures have more than doubled in the past two years. Last summer, Blue Generation offered free freight on Web orders. The results were so phenomenal that they expanded it across the board and now offer free freight on all orders over \$175.



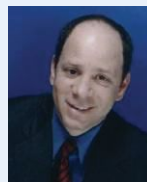
**38. Owen Dunne, Director
Embroidery Division,
Robison-Anton Embroidery Thread**
2011 Rank: 32

For more than 90 years, Robison-Anton, a division of American & Efird, has been a premier provider of thread for sewing and embroidery with current sales exceeding \$300 million. Dunne oversees the embroidery division, where he recently launched Signature Fine Embroidery Thread, which is ideal for creating intricate details and fine lettering when embroidering. Another significant achievement this year has been the completion of a color book for the U.S. Army’s Institute of Heraldry. It’s a useful reference for embroiderers with military contracts, and all of the products are U.S.-made.



**39. Josh Peyser, President
MV Sport/Weatherproof (*asi/68318*)**
2011 Rank: 36

While the company enjoys annual sales of about \$62 million and Peyser projects this number to grow between 5% and 10% in the coming year, he has no intention of resting on his laurels. With an in-stock full line of more than 120 styles of sweatshirts, T-shirts and more, Peyser already has plans to introduce some 40 new styles in 2013, including new men’s and ladies’ sweatshirt designs and two new bag styles. In 2011, MV Sport/Weatherproof also inaugurated 32 Degrees by Weatherproof, a line of active jackets, sportswear and inner wear.



Greg Nathanson

**40. Greg Nathanson, CEO;
Chase Roh, Ph.D., President
AnaJet Inc. (*asi/16000*)**
2011 Rank: 41

With Nathanson as CEO and its founder, Roh, as president, this direct-to-garment printer manufacturer has grown its reach (adding more than a dozen international distributors, growing its domestic sales force, and doubling its tech support and operations departments), and is currently on pace to see a 75% sales revenue increase in 2012. In August 2011, AnaJet launched its mPower series of high-speed printers, and recently rolled out a major release of its proprietary software, AnaRIP. Founded in 2004, AnaJet’s client base now exceeds 2,300 worldwide, with approximately 65% of these based in the U.S.



Chase Roh



**41. Richard Hirsch, Managing Director
Amann USA**
2011 Rank: 43

Since 1987, Amann USA has been the leader in developing polyester thread for embroidery. Isacord, which is considered to be the most popular thread in Amann’s product line and the premier embroidery choice for household and

36 Champion of Growth

Ray Titus



Ray Titus, CEO of EmbroidMe (*asi/384000*), continues to guide his company with a steady hand while seeking opportunities to extend the decorated-apparel giant's place in the industry. While he may be running the largest embroidery, screen-printing and custom apparel franchise in the world, Titus isn't interested in sitting on his laurels.

"We're looking to expand our areas of expertise so that we can serve as a marketing arm to our clients' businesses and provide complete branding solutions with a wide variety of apparel and promotional product offerings," Titus says.

EmbroidMe came in at number 19 on this year's *Counselor* magazine's Top 40 Distributors ranking, and in the Top 100 Global Franchises, according to Franchise Direct. With more than 300 stores across 12 countries, using some 1,600 heads, the company continues to grow. Its North American product sales hit \$82.7 million in 2011, up from \$70.5 million the prior year.

In 2012, the company introduced EmbroidMe Vision, a new point-of-sale and accounting system to be used for franchisees to use for both e-commerce company stores and through their websites. It also rolled out new machines, like the SWF multi-head embroidery machine and Brother GT-782 White-Ink Garment Printer.

Titus believes that the biggest trend in the industry has been the continued decline of fashion cotton and natural fabrication goods, replaced by polyester and easy-care prod-

commercial embroidery machines, sews better than rayon, comes in close to 400 colors and is cited by industry professionals as the best thread for maximum productivity. Hirsch has more than 25 years of experience in the industry and has spent the past 15 years as managing director at Amann. Under his guidance, polyester thread now accounts for a 60% share of the marketplace.



42. Joyce Jagger, Owner The Embroidery Coach
2011 Rank: 47

Jagger, who has turned around many failing embroidery businesses, is well-known in the embroidery world for taking the complexity out of embroidery and breaking it down into easy-to-understand steps for new and existing embroiderers. Since 2000, she has provided training and information for decorators through online webinars, one-on-one training, e-newsletters, blog posts, and a

new members-only resource site: Embroidery TrainingResourceCenter.com. This past year, she released a new edition of her book, *The Truth About Embroidery Business Success: 7 Elements To A Successful Home-Based Embroidery Business*, and launched The Embroidery Business Success Starter Kit, which includes more than 175 videos, how-to articles, and other tools.



43. Ryan Moor, Founder and CEO Ryonet Corp.
2011 Rank: 46

A true entrepreneurial spirit and the drive to succeed have helped Moor to lead his startup company from a small online supplier of screen-printing supplies to one of the fastest-growing cloud-retail companies - and one of the fastest-growing companies in Vancouver, WA, for three years running. Moor started his company in 2004 with a loan from his parents, and today that company is turning a profit of \$27 million and has sold more than 25,000 screen-printing presses in the U.S. Earlier this year, Ryonet relocated

its headquarters to a new 40,000-square-foot facility that includes office, classroom, warehouse and manufacturing space.



44. Gary Schultz, CEO Edwards Garment Co.
(*asi/51752*)
2011 Rank: 44

Rising to 15th on *Stitches'* 2012 list of Top 25 apparel suppliers, Edwards Garment Co. saw sales revenue of \$55.2 million in 2011 - 15% more than the year before, and its third year of annual revenue growth in a row. Schultz has worked to ensure the 145-year-old company continues to meet the demands of its more than 6,000 distributor and decorator customers, sourcing a wide range of uniform/industrial and promotional apparel out of its two warehouses. The company adds new styles all the time, such as an expanded line of woven shirts and sweaters and new offerings in chef apparel for the hospitality market.

ucts. He also sees eco-friendly apparel as a key area for EmbroidMe and the industry at large in the near future, pointing out Boardroom Custom Clothing (*asi/40705*) as an example. "As our customers are more concerned with sustainability, we need to find ever-increasing solutions to meet that need," Titus says.

And, last month EmbroidMe signed a master franchise agreement with franchisees Ernesto Martinez and Adolfo Martinez for franchise development in Costa Rica, Panama, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala over the next several years. "This is a very exciting time for EmbroidMe, and we look forward to bringing our brand to more countries around the globe and expanding our footprint," says Mark Johnson, EmbroidMe president. — AP

“As our customers are more concerned with sustainability, we need to find ever-increasing solutions to meet that need.”

Ray Titus, EmbroidMe
(*asi/384000*)



45. John P. Colman, CEO and President Pantograms Manufacturing Co. Inc.

2011 Rank: 38

Under Colman's 30-plus years of leadership, Pantograms is a leading equipment supplier to the garment embellishment industry. The company carries top brands – everything from Expert and Meistergram embroidery machines to DTG direct-to-garment printers and Colman's proprietary Forté Lettering, Editing and Digitizing software products. Most recently, Pantograms introduced the Digital Heat FX department, which carries Drucktech heat-press equipment, Graphtec line cutters and Forever digital transfer application papers. Through its Embroidery Academy, Pantograms has provided thousands of commercial embroiderers with the skills they need to succeed.

46. Scott M. Ritter, President SMR Software Inc. and Decorated Apparel Expo Inc.

New

Although Ritter's list of personal and business achievements gets lengthier all the time, he considers the work he's done on behalf of the industry his "finest accomplishment." While running successful screen-printing business Northwind in the early '90s, Ritter, who had been programming computers since 1971, recognized a need for software that was capable of accurately pricing and quoting embroidery orders, including those on multi-head machines. SMR Software was born shortly thereafter, and "Pricelist Professional" has grown into the industry's leading quoting software, with nearly 4,000 installations worldwide. Ritter also founded the Decorated Apparel Expo, now cited as a must-attend show, in 1997, focusing on the often-overlooked mid-section of the U.S. He estimates his products and services help generate over \$500 million each year for others in the industry.



47. Ed Levy, President Digitize4u Inc./ EmbForum

2011 Rank: 53

Levy has established himself as an innovator, educator and leader in the decorated-apparel industry. A 22-year industry veteran, he has owned his own digitizing businesses since 1991 and is the founder of EmbForum, an independent professional software users group for embroiderers. He routinely writes informative articles for leading industry publications, is a well-known speaker at all major domestic trade shows, and is currently expanding internationally. Levy, who also serves as director of software products for Hirsch International, recently added a new support division at Hirsch, which provides application and software support to customers. Levy's biggest achievement this year has been consulting with several of the industry's largest and most influential customers and helping them implement custom programs for production automation, saving them millions of dollars collectively.



Jackson Burnett

48. Jackson Burnett, Owner and Co-Founder; Christopher Bernat, Chief Revenue Officer and Co-Founder Vapor Apparel

(*asi/93396*)

2011 Rank: 56

Since Burnett and Bernat founded the company nine years ago, Vapor Apparel has enjoyed double-digit growth every year except 2009. Focused on all things sublimation, last year it grew 19% and is currently tracking at 25% growth for 2012. Vapor offers high-quality textiles and apparel, particularly in eco-friendly styles, and in the past two years it has launched a new decorating division as well as a number of new products, such as the new Eco Polo, neck gaiter, pre-made customizable cycling jersey, and a line of UPF 50+ shirts for outdoor and coastal markets.



Christopher Bernat



49. Jens Petersson, CEO Cutter & Buck

(*asi/47965*)

2011 Rank: 39

Offering branded sportswear, from active sports lifestyle to luxury professional wearables, Cutter & Buck has seen revenue increases from all sales channels year-over-year.

Under Petersson's direction, the company has innovated with new technology fabrics such as its new top-level Cocona outerwear, likely to appeal to many of its more than 10,000 wholesale clients, which range from premium retailers to top golf destinations to NFL and Division 1 sports programs. Its distributor and decorator customers continue to sing the company's praises, as Cutter & Buck's numerous key supplier awards indicate.



50. Dale Call, CEO
Virginia T's (*asi/93917*)
2011 Rank: 42

In her 28 years running Virginia T's, Call has guided it from a tiny mom-and-pop shop to one of the largest apparel suppliers in the ad specialty industry. With three warehouses and about 275 employees, this apparel supplier continues to grow. The supplier offers about 60 brands including Hanes, Gildan and Reebok, in styles ranging from T-shirts to athletic wear, headwear, blankets and wovens. The company enjoyed a 14% revenue boost between 2010 and 2011 to \$58.9 million and looks poised for further growth in 2012. Making sure it stays ahead of industry trends, Virginia T's recently launched a mobile-enabled catalog.



51. Niamh O'Connor,
**Art Director/
Evil Genius**
Urban Threads
2011 Rank: 54

Brilliant, slightly quirky and amazingly creative describe both O'Connor and her award-winning designs that have taken the decorating industry by storm and brought machine embroidery into the realm of contemporary design. Urban Threads offers exclusive designs that cater to alternative markets; the company has thousands of designs available and its online tutorials, DIY projects and design blogs have allowed the company to reach a wide audience of decorators and non-stitchers. Urban Threads' innovative designs utilize the strengths of stitch direction, dimension and specialized fills, which have allowed its customers to make exciting marketable products. O'Connor is excited to introduce a new series titled "Urban Entrepreneurs," which showcases embroiderers who use the designs as part of their businesses.

52. Michael Robertson,
President, CEO
Specialty Graphic Imaging
Association
2011 Rank: 55

Every CEO has a vision – Robertson's vision is for SGIA to be the primary information resource for the industry. With 15,000 imaging professionals and more than 3,000 companies, SGIA is the leading association for wide-format digital imaging and

52 The Opportunist Michael Robertson

One of Michael Robertson's favorite aspects of his work as president and CEO of the Specialty Graphic Imaging Association (SGIA) is the chance to connect suppliers, manufacturers and industry professionals with one another. "We're dedicated to helping the specialty imaging community make sound business decisions," Robertson says.

Robertson has served at SGIA since the early 1980s. While he believes the current economic challenges have tightened profit margins and stepped up competition for decorators significantly, Robertson still sees plenty of SGIA members who have taken steps to position themselves well.

"The leading businesses are adapting by creating business models that best fit their customers' needs," Robertson says. "They're producing a wider range of products suited to their client base and using the added capability to get a foothold in new markets."

The group's *SGIA Journal* and SGIA.org website continue to be must-reads for those in the specialty imaging community (at the end of September it released its largest journal to date). But its annual SGIA Expo remains the pinnacle of the organization's offerings, expanding its education and networking sessions each year. It recently earned a Tradeshow Executive's Grand Award as the fastest-growing trade show among the top 100 trade shows in the U.S.

specialty imaging applications. New technologies and new markets are driving growth, and SGIA provides members with the know-how, advice and knowledge they need to succeed. In addition, the 2012 SGIA Expo featured a Digital Apparel Production Zone where attendees checked out the newest trends in digital garment decorating as well as the Screen Printed Apparel Training Zone for hands-on demonstrations of the latest special-effect techniques.



53. Chris Waldick,
**Founder and
President**
JCW Software LLC
2011 Rank: 40

Earlier this year, Waldick's company released the latest version of its widely used business management software for small decorators, FastManager 5. Simplifying the quote process for users to less than five minutes, the program also allows small businesses to process credit cards in real time and connect directly to its massive vendor catalog collection. With more than 2,500 users and extensive demos and support offerings, Waldick's company continues to make it simpler for embroiderers and decorators to enter the industry and thrive.



**54. Lee Caroselli
Barnes, Owner**
**Balboa Threadworks
Inc.**
2011 Rank: 48

Considered one of the industry's top digitizers, Caroselli Barnes has received several awards for her designs, including a recent *Stitches* Golden Needle award. Since 1987, more than 50,000 customers have purchased designs from Balboa's extensive stock design library. Keeping up with industry trends, many of the designs now feature bling embellishments and background graphics. Balboa also offers online training and support, videos and digitizing software. Caroselli Barnes shares her knowledge and expertise as a speaker at industry trade shows. She's currently co-writing a book on digitizing.

55. Akira Ikeda, Chairman and CEO
Mimaki Engineering
2011 Rank: 62

Conducting about three-quarters of its business overseas, this Nagano, Japan-based operation nonetheless makes a strong impact on the American market with its unique ink-jet

“The leading businesses are adapting by creating business models that best fit the needs of their customers.”

Michael Robertson, Specialty Graphic Imaging Association

With 18 webinars in 2012 specific to the garment industry, the group also provides a wealth of educational offerings for those in the embroidered-apparel industry throughout the year. For hands-on learners, SGIA offers workshops at the association's headquarters in Fairfax, VA, throughout the year.

Robertson expects 2013 to be a good year for the decorated-apparel industry. But even with the economy on the mend, Robertson expects to see a competitive market in which management expertise is heavily prized, beyond just a good product and price. “Being able to produce a quality product won't be enough,” he says. “Managers who are proactive and efficient will take their companies far.”
— AP



57. Steven Jeffery, President Baby Lock USA; Ken Tacony, CEO Tacony Corp.

New

For the past 13 years, Jeffery has served as senior vice president of sewing divisions at Tacony Corp. and currently oversees the company's Baby Lock USA property, which manufactures sewing, embroidery and quilting machines. Tacony Sewing Central introduces about 200 new products every year for the company's independent dealers, such as its new A-line series of crafting and quilting machines, and the Enlighten and Evolution serger machines. It offers dealers monthly sales and product training, including the new Sew@Home online education program. In the sewing sector, the company's annual sales revenue has increased year-over-year for every one of Jeffery's 13 years at the helm.

58. Daniel Fucci, U.S. Director Sierra Technology Group

New

Referred to in some circles as the best digitizing instructor in the country, punching veteran Daniel Fucci has been for 13 years U.S. director

for Argentina-based Sierra Technology Group, a company that has developed software and hardware solutions for the textile market since 1988. Sierra's offerings include the Planet Embroidery application for mobile devices, which enables embroiderers to create text embroidery designs in seven standard machine formats and to send the designs by e-mail. The company's software products for embroiderers and digitizers are rich too, including Stitch Era Universal, a powerful embroidery design software that increases efficiency. There's also Visual Stitch & Print, a solution that allows decorators to create realistic embroidery and screen-printing simulations on 2-D and 3-D models, as well as to output those samples to print or video, whether for a catalog or website.

59. Steve Garnier, President and CEO Epilog Laser

2011 Rank: 57

A manufacturer of CO2 and fiber-laser engraving, cutting and marking systems, Epilog Laser was recently awarded a patent for its Waveguide laser tubes - part of its Zing Starter Series and Legend Elite Series. The company recently redesigned these Legend Elite systems with a more contemporary look and new features such as Super Silent cooling fans and a more robust vector cutting table. As Epilog nears the sale of its 30,000th laser system, Garnier expects 2012 to be the company's biggest year yet.

60. Eric Withaar, President Sportco (asi/88792)

2011 Rank: 67

Sportco manufactures and decorates apparel for fashion, corporate and team wear. Since its founding in 1989, Withaar has served as the president and built the company into a successful business with more than 5,000 customers, averaging consistent sales revenue growth and regularly hiring new sales representatives. The company offers numerous decorating options and, keeping up with fashion trends, has added rhinestones and nailheads as well as heat-transfer glitter and metallic designs to its repertoire. Withaar acquired the Gabrielle Royce and GabiSport brands in 2011 and recently acquired a marketing and event merchandising company.

61. Mitchell Fersten, President Fersten Worldwide (asi/53974)

New

A new addition to the Power List, Fersten earned the honor by spearheading a supplier that packs a powerful one-two punch when it comes to apparel and in-house decoration. Of late, Fersten Worldwide ramped up its already robust embellishment offerings by adding mediums like laser etching, embossing, 3-D puff embroidery, appliqué and reverse appliqué. With domestic and overseas decoration

and cutting technology. In the last year, the manufacturer introduced the TX500 direct sublimation printer for improved print speed on polyester fabrics, as well as the TS500 sublimation printer for textiles. The company deepened its presence in Asia last November with the establishment of Mimaki Indonesia.



56. Jay Malanga, President Shopworks

2011 Rank: 50

Serving approximately 565 companies with more than 3,000 user licenses, this manufacturer of software products including OnSite and OrdersLink for administration, accounting and pricing in the imprinted product industry, continues to make its products easier to use. Under Malanga, Shopworks recently rolled out ProofStuff.com, online software that allows customers to professionally present image proofs to customers, and gather and track art, quotes and order approvals. It has also delivered some form of training to almost every one of its customers, whether at a live training facility, or online via webinar or pre-recorded video.

options, the supplier-decorator's embellishment capabilities are a perfect complement to its complete line of outerwear, apparel and headwear for both the Fersten Worldwide and FILA GOLF brands. Indeed, being a one-stop shop for apparel and decoration has spurred growth at Fersten Worldwide; sales were up 10% to 15% during 2012.



**62. Paul Ashworth,
President
Bernina of America**

2011 Rank: 63

Ashworth stepped into his role as president of this manufacturer of sewing, embroidery and quilting machines at the start of 2012, bringing two decades of marketing and business expansion experience to his role. He has made it a priority to build a strong network among Bernina's 450 independent dealers and approximately 540 total stores. Under Ashworth, the company also continues to innovate, recently launching its new 7 Series line of machines, which boast 10 inches of free space to the right of the needle, and include the Bernina 9 Hook, enabling higher sewing speeds and 80% extra bobbin capacity.



**63. Deborah Jones,
Owner
My Embroidery
Mentor**

2011 Rank: 61

Embroiderer extraordinaire, Jones has more than 30 years of experience working with computerized embroidery techniques as a teacher, author and lecturer. In 2008, she founded My Embroidery Mentor, which provides videos and tutorials for decorating apparel and accessories. Her educational resource website now has 8,000 subscribers, and her monthly e-mail newsletter has more than 25,000 subscribers. In late 2012, in a joint venture with Designs in Machine Embroidery magazine, Jones is expanding her reach by launching "Learn from the Experts," a new video series. Beginning with "Stabilizing for the Economy," each title will contain 30 minutes of video instruction, plus support materials including designs, reference sheets and charts.



**64. Erich Campbell,
Digitizer and E-Com-
merce Manager
Black Duck Inc.**

2011 Rank: 60

Creative, innovative and widely considered a vanguard in his field, Campbell is a man of many talents and interests. First, he's an award-winning digitizer whose talents have been showcased in industry magazines, including on *Stitches* covers and fashion shoots in 2012. Campbell shares his vast knowledge of digitizing,

59 Cool Threads, Quality Decoration Eric Withaar

A magazine ad changed Eric Withaar's life, setting him on the path to become what he is today: president of Sportco (*asi/88792*), an innovative supplier as renowned for its top-notch in-house decoration services as it is for its unique brands of apparel.

In the late 1980s, Withaar was working for Anheuser-Busch when he saw a print spot advertising a video on how to break into the apparel business. Withaar wrote a letter of interest to the man behind the ad and received a tape in the mail. "The video was just him in a chair telling you how to get into the business," Withaar recalls.

But it was more than that; it was Withaar's introduction to the rest of his life. Seeing opportunity, Withaar started embroidering part-time out of his home, stitching for sports teams and clients like VFWs and bars, which he was already connected with through his day job. Business boomed. So much so, in fact, that Withaar took a leave of absence from Anheuser-Busch in 1991 to focus on his decorating business. The following four years were a whirlwind of successes and permutations that culminated with Withaar buying Sportco, a company that he has spurred to greater heights over the last 17 years. "We've always been a stickler for quality decoration and apparel," he says.

While Withaar later sold Sportco, he remains president and a managing partner who has been an ample force behind the company's success, helping to spearhead 25%

embroidery and e-commerce innovation for this industry with a strong online presence on various social media sites and has won rave reviews for his blog posts on Black Duck Inc.'s website and his On Links and Needles blog (on *Stitches.com*). His newest design collaboration with thread and supplies vendor EnMart features a new embroidery material called Q-104 that will allow embroiderers to stitch 3-D vintage-style designs without the use of 3-D foam and will be temporarily exclusive to Black Duck Inc.



**65. Kristine Shreve,
Director of Marketing
EnMart and Ensign
Emblem**

2011 Rank: 69

EnMart not only sells embroidery and sublimation supplies to commercial decorators, but through Shreve also runs the two must-read industry blogs *EmbroideryTalk* and *SubliStuff*, helping to educate and engage the decorating community. Shreve, who also writes the *DecQuorum* blog on *Stitches.com*, has led the charge in her company's embrace of social media - and has been instrumental in educating

industry professionals about how to use social media in their own marketing efforts. This year, the company, a subsidiary of Ensign Emblem, introduced the Q-104 water-soluble topping for dimensional embroidery, which can be used to create 3-D designs without digitizing.

**66. Jesse, Charlie and Maggie
Mack, Co-Owners
Midwest Products Inc.**

New

Is it magnetic or is it magic? According to embroiderers around the world, the HoopMaster is a revolutionary system that has helped make hooping easier, faster and more consistent. The newest invention from Midwest Products is the Mighty Hoop, which works in conjunction with the HoopMaster. The Mighty Hoop is a magnetic hoop that allows the outer ring to automatically adjust to different fabric types, holding thick and thin garments in place through magnetic force. The Mack family founded Midwest Products in 1998 and develops products tailored to meet the needs of their customers. Currently, more than 30,000 of their embroidery hooping devices are being used by companies in over 52 countries.

“To be competitive, you have to understand trends, and you have to provide a good price and fast delivery times.”

Eric Withaar, Sportco (*asi/88792*)

to 30% annual growth in recent years. Under Withaar’s leadership, Sportco last year acquired the Gabrielle Rohde Royce brand, a fashion-forward line of women’s sport and casual apparel.

Withaar makes sure that Sportco’s decoration capabilities are at the forefront of what the industry offers. Decorating its own apparel and operating as a contract shop that embellishes others’ threads, Sportco executes retail-style embellishment with ease, using a laser bridge to cut cool distressed appliqué designs and combining appliqué and screen printing for multimedia looks that mimic mall fashions. To cater to what Withaar says is a growing taste for bling, Sportco has built up its rhinestone and nail-head capabilities.

Since Sportco has its own apparel brands, Withaar must stay clued in to current clothing trends. He says hoodies styled after letterman jackets – which Sportco offers through its casual athletic wear brand Sportco Authentic – are poised to take off. Interest in women’s fleeces tailored with a form-flattering cut is growing, he adds, noting that the popularity of moisture-management polyester performance threads won’t abate anytime soon. “To be competitive, you have to understand trends,” Withaar says, “and you have to provide a good price and fast delivery times.” – *CR*



**67. Vasilis Thomaidis,
President and CEO
Compucon USA**

2011 Rank: 64

Thomaidis’ technology firm offers the industry its flagship EOS embroidery software as well as its Stitch & Sew program for the beginning embroiderer, and continues to enrich the market with its laser-cutting and engraving machine series and third-party OEM products. While based in Greece, the company has expanded with sales and support offices in major markets like Japan and the U.S., where it enjoys an estimated customer base of 7,000 companies. Compucon earned €3 million (\$3.8 million) last year, and Thomaidis expects growth of about 20% in 2012.

Princess Kate – has been turning heads in richly embroidered dresses ever since becoming a British Royal. From her hand-embroidered and lace-appliquéd wedding dress to the Asian-inspired white and gold embroidered gown she wore to a gala in Malaysia, the 30-year-old duchess’ formal ensembles have rarely included anything less than the finest stitchwork. Not only does she wear immaculately embellished dresses and gowns – it was revealed recently that Kate is nifty with needle and thread, having a passion for embroidery. Given the inevitable influence of the world’s most popular princess on fashion and beyond, the former Ms. Middleton certainly deserves a place on embroidery’s Power List.

which include a small stitched border, Digitally Printed Emblems, and Laser Names, which allow for greater apparel personalization. This comes after the successful U.S. introduction of the Name Badges International division at the end of 2010. Carr estimates that World Emblem trains about 1,500 clients each year, whether on-site at one of its 10 locations worldwide, or online through videos or downloadable documents.



**68. Kate Middleton,
Duchess
of Cambridge**

New

Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge – more commonly called



**69. Randy Carr
President and CEO
World Emblem International
(*asi/98264*)**

2011 Rank: 65

As a leader in custom embroidered, sublimated and screen-printed emblems, badges and patches, World Emblem brought in \$25 million in sales revenue last year. In 2012, the company launched Clean Cut Emblems,

**70. Frank Ma, CEO and President
RiCOMA International Corp.**

2011 Rank: 70

With its U.S. headquarters in Miami and its manufacturing base in Shenzhen, China, RiCOMA is engaged in the global production, sales and service of embroidery machines and software. The company experienced 20% revenue sales growth last year, bringing in \$8 million. Ma has guided the manufacturer as it developed and launched the All-in-One embroidery machine, including pre-set hoops and its Team Viewer online support software built directly into the machine, though the company also offers free weekly webinars to customers.

66 Hoop Makers Jesse, Charlie, and Maggie Mack

A few years into their embroidery business, Charlie and Maggie Mack, along with their son Jesse, learned firsthand how necessity could be the mother of invention. Having trouble keeping the logos lined up properly on garments they were decorating, but wanting to avoid having to mark up garments, they devised a rudimentary circular device that seemed to do the trick.

Though they just used the system at their embroidery shop, a visitor to the Midwest Products shop saw the broader potential for the product. “A friend who sold embroidery machines saw what we were doing and said, ‘All embroiderers need this,’ and he helped us decide to pursue it,” Jesse says.

The friend was right. Since patenting the HoopMaster in 1998, the company had so much success that the family team was able to sell off their embroidery business in 2006. The small shop they began in

has grown to a 16,000-square-foot building. Mack estimates they’ve sold between 25,000 and 30,000 hooping devices in 52 countries.

International sales for the company have been on the rise, particularly in Germany, Switzerland and the U.K. With a total of half a dozen patents now, Midwest Products recently added the Mighty Hoop to the company’s offerings. “Normal hoops aren’t designed to go on thick items – your Carhartt jackets, or leather,” Jesse says. “A lot of customers who get our Mighty Hoop stop using the standard hoops that come with their machines.”

Despite the company’s success and change in offerings over the years, it continues to be a small, family-run operation, employing just 10 people (Jesse’s brother Andy also helps run the company). Even though the team innovates and develops new products, the focus has remained on serving customers and providing a quality product. “We like solving problems,” Mack says. – AP



71. Joanna Grant, Vice President, Graphic Production and Support Services
Affinity Express

2011 Rank: 66

Affinity Express is a leading provider of advertising and marketing production solutions for print, digital and editorial. As one of the company leaders, Grant is involved in expanding Affinity’s services to its clients, which has recently included adding ad operations and sales support coordinators to work with each client. Affinity also introduced the Idea Custom Solutions brand, a team and website exclusively focused on the promotional products industry. Her team is especially proud to have been recognized for the third consecutive year by the Global Services 100, a study of the world’s leading outsourcing providers.



72. Manuel, Owner/Designer
Manuel Couture
New

Often referred to as the “Rhinstone Rembrandt,” Manuel Cuevas – known simply as Manuel – is a legendary costume design artist whose richly embroidered and rhinestoned creations have been worn by a bevy of icons and celebrities: country music luminaries like Johnny Cash and Glen Campbell; rock-n-roll gods like Bob Dylan; dancers, artists, movie stars – even U.S. presidents. All have donned

custom-made Manuel threads. Still hard at work in his Nashville studio, Manuel helped pioneer the lavishly embellished style of country music stage wear that proved popular for decades. His aesthetic? Always make something that’s unique and true to the intended wearer. “Record companies call me to help fabricate personalities for their artists,” he says.



73. Michael Savoia, Owner
Villa Savoia Inc.
2011 Rank: 59

Savoia is well-known for using hand-guided and computerized embroidery techniques to create trendsetting embroidery and appliqué work for the high-end interior design industry. His work has been visible in most American shelter magazines including *Architectural Digest* and *Elle Décor*. In spring 2012, he introduced an embroidery and textile collection and moved his company from California to Rhode Island to more actively court the East Coast market. Savoia is also branching out into hands-on mentoring and teaching an embroidery class at the Rhode Island School of Design. Offering a series of workshops and classes to introduce embroidery to textile design and other students is part of his long-term goal of taking the program to select schools around the country.



74. Jenny Hart, Founder and Owner
Sublime Stitching
2011 Rank: 73

“Embroidery in the United States is unexpectedly in revival thanks in large part to the efforts of Jenny Hart.” That resounding endorsement comes from Nicholas R. Bell, curator of American Craft and Decorative Art at Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian American Art Museum. The praise highlights how, in Hart’s capable hands, the traditional craft of hand-embroidery becomes high art. Her pieces have been the focus of solo exhibitions from Paris to New York, while her work has been featured in prestigious publications like *Vogue*, *The Los Angeles Times* and *The New York Times Magazine*. An award-winning embroidery author and teacher for whom hipster clothier Mod Cloth named a dress, Hart offers a diverse range of embroidery patterns through her Los Angeles-based business, which also sells widely-purchased starter kits, tools, textiles and more.



75. Tony Diao, Sales Manager
Topshow Outdoor Product Co. Ltd.
New

Diao is sales manager of a Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province, China-based company that offers a comprehensive range of customizable headwear and socks to many U.S.-based suppliers and end-buyers, including Disney, FedEx, Kmart and Otto International. The company, whose factories are ISO 9000-certified, decorates samples and blanks with embroidery, appliqué, sequin embroidery, rubber labels, PVC heat transfers, screen printing and sublimation. While not the largest headwear supplier in China, Topshow is by far the top supplier to U.S.- and European-based headwear clients – and one to watch.

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A LOOK FORWARD

How will technology continue to shape decorating companies' futures? How will decorators' overseas competition affect U.S.-based business? Check out what members of the *Stitches Power 75* have to say on important industry topics as they offer their outlooks for decorators in 2013.

By Joan Chaykin and Nicole Rollender

Just like last year, *Stitches* asked the 2012 Power 75 members in October for their thoughts on important topics and trends facing the industry today – decorating trends, technology and product safety, and what challenges they think will be most pressing for businesses in the decorated-apparel sector in the coming year. On the following pages, read their responses to these, and other, critical areas for decorator and supplier success in 2013.

When asked what will make industry companies more successful in 2013, Martin Kristiaman, CEO of DecoNetwork Pty. Ltd., says: “The mantra for any decorating business that wants to succeed in this new era of consumer-driven markets has to be: ‘Make it easy for the consumer.’ Demand is increasingly unpredictable and inventory is harder to predict. Having the flexible technology to meet changing consumer behavior will reduce inventory risk and costs. If you make it easier for the consumer to do business, you enhance customer service. You definitely need improved turnaround times to cope with the growing number of orders.”

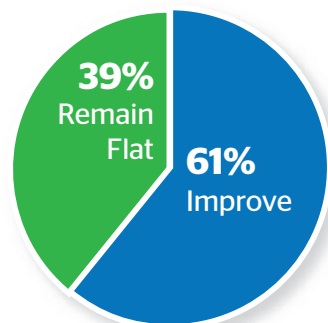
And, as this survey was tallied before the election, it's interesting to note that folks this year were evenly split (50% Republican/50% Democrat) about who they thought would win the White House. (Last year, the results showed 76% of respondents thought a Republican would win the 2012 presidential election.)

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

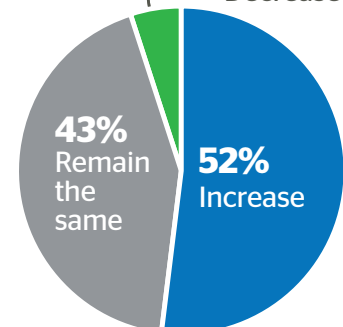
Optimism is high this year as a majority of the industry's power players feel that the economy will improve in 2013. And while 10% of respondents last year

expected the economy to continue to decline, this year no respondents expect it to decline further. Christopher Bernat, chief revenue officer and co-founder of Vapor Apparel (*asi/93396*), is pragmatic about the future. “The U.S. economy is dealing with the ramifications of global deleveraging in the developed world,” he says. “That's a huge trend – and is here for a while. The fiscal cliff issues and the loss of the payroll tax deduction will cause headwinds for 2013. But you can grow in this economy if you innovate and deal with reality.”

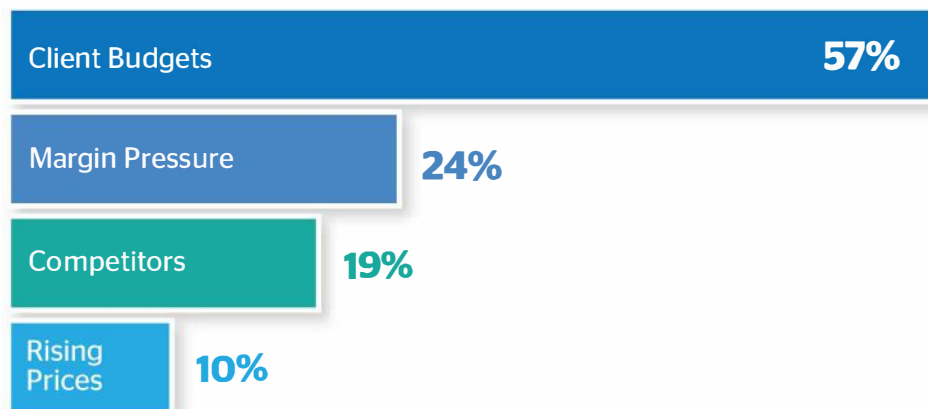
What direction do you think the U.S. economy will take in 2013?



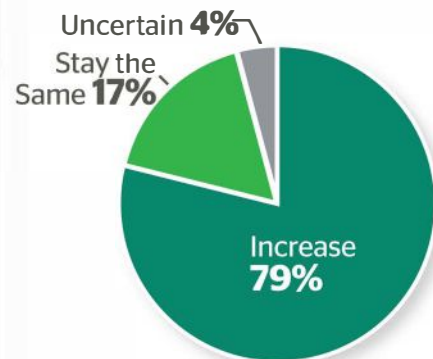
What will happen to the price of cotton in 2013?



What are the biggest factors affecting decorating businesses now?



In the decorated apparel industry, how will social media's use as an effective marketing tool change in 2013?



TECHNOLOGY

Web-based programs saw the biggest bump in importance from 44% last year to 59% this year. "This is the new era of cloud-based programs," Kristiaman says. "Using a new generation of business systems over the cloud means information is easily accessible by all parties from anywhere at any time. Decorating businesses need to provide flexibility for consumers to place orders at their convenience through consumer self-serve, and give them confidence by providing visual feedback and detailed confirmation as they go through their ordering process."

Respondents also posted significant increases in importance for mobile apps and customer relationship management systems. And, while social networking saw a fall from 33% last year to 27% this year, a whopping 79% feel that it'll be more effectively used as a marketing tool in the coming year.

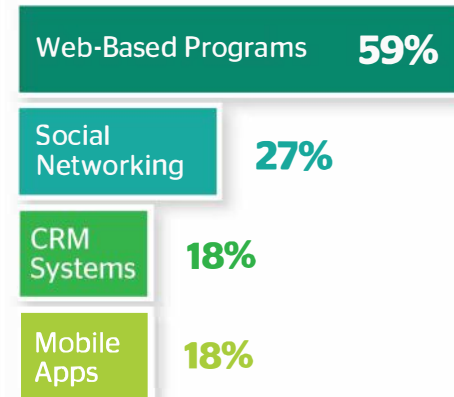
BUYING TRENDS

More than half of respondents think that requests for USA-made products will continue to be a trend in 2013. Among the reasons cited for this are increasing costs and slow turnaround for doing business overseas. "And, some of it really is backlash against foreign-made products," says

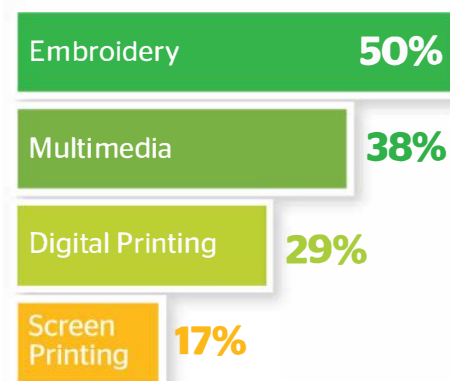
Kristine Shreve, marketing director of Ensign Emblem/EnMart. "People tend to want quality, and much of the overseas products are sold on price, with quality being secondary."

Erich Campbell, digitizer and e-commerce manager of Albuquerque, NM-based Black Duck Inc., notes that all of the surveyed-on trends will become part of the "decorator's arsenal" in the future. "Multimedia, retail-styled decoration will benefit not only from multi-decoration systems, but from the increasingly fashion-forward offerings of suppliers," he says. "This will allow those who can't afford to add such

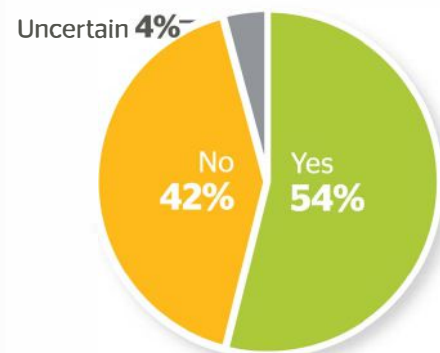
Which technological tools will be most important to businesses in the decorated apparel market in 2013?



Which decoration methods will be most popular with end-buyers in 2013?



Buyers are requesting U.S.-made products more so than in previous years. Will this continue?

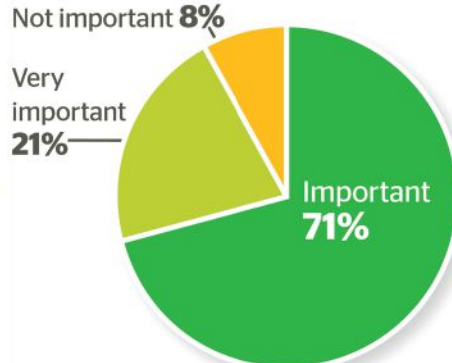


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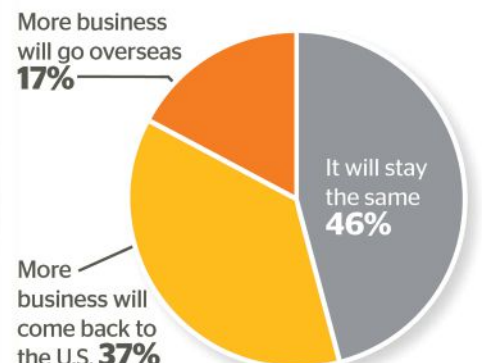
What trend(s) do you think decorators will capitalize on in 2013?



How important do you think product safety initiatives are in the decorated apparel industry?



How will decorators' and digitizers' overseas competition affect U.S.-based businesses in 2013?



systems to their own shops a way to experiment with multimedia. An uptick in sublimation and other forms of heat printing will allow for easy, small-run personalization, which is required to fully take advantage of online decoration models in order to flourish." Bernat, like many other Power 75 members, says mass personalization will become very important, "especially for performance wear, and this will continue to grow at an accelerated rate," he says.

Digital printing, which is cited as the third most requested decoration option, will continue to rise in popularity. "Digital printing in all variety of forms, techniques and application has matured," Kristiaman says. "This will be the decorating method that attracts end-buyers to personalize garments, team and club wear, social events, hard goods devices/gadgets from tablets/phones, car number plates, hand bags, shoes, promotional products and more."

COMPETITIVE EDGE

Power 75 members agree that both industry suppliers and decorators need to continually evaluate their business models, products, service levels and more to stay competitive. On the supplier side, offering the best products and services tops the list. "Thinking globally while exhibiting good business practices locally will keep suppliers ahead of their competitors," says Hajo Voeller, president and CEO of Madeira USA Ltd. "We all work within the context of global considerations, but for the supplier that's able to deliver the best service and quality products at the local level, the rewards will be customer loyalty and a steady revenue stream. Part of providing the best service is practicing sustainability at the manufacturing level. Suppliers that adopt an attitude of responsibility for our planet and demonstrate, through their actions

and the products they promote, that they are accountable for their decisions, will keep their customers' loyalty."

For decorators, it'll be important to assess customers' changing needs – and be equipped to fulfill both large-volume orders and short custom runs. "We'll also have to decide when it's right to adjust our pricing to combat increasing costs and how to handle those increases carefully and transparently with our customers," says Campbell, who notes decorators will need to deal with customer-supplied goods and art assets, especially in relation to digital printing.

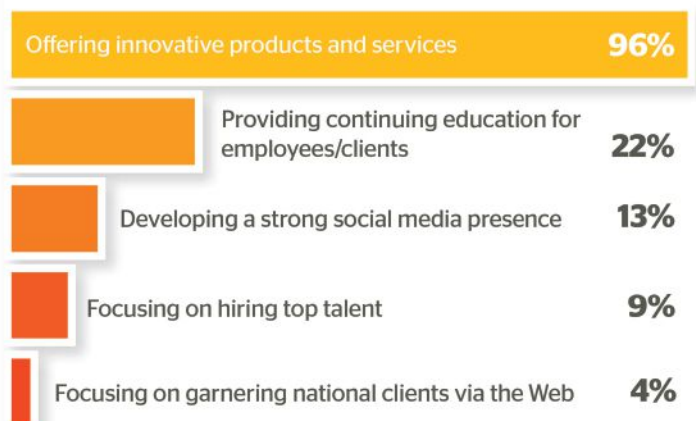
Suppliers and decorators will also have to add services that meet and exceed client demand "over the Web and mobile devices," Kristiaman says.

JOAN CHAYKIN is a managing editor for ASI; NICOLE ROLLENDER is editor of *Stitches*. Contact: jchaykin@asical.com and nrollender@asical.com.

What do you think will make industry suppliers more successful in 2013?



What will make decorating firms more successful in 2013?



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APPAREL WITH A HEART

Across the U.S., apparel decorators are using their stitching and printing skills to support worthy causes.

By Christopher Ruvo

There's a lot of giving back in the decorated-apparel community, as evidenced by countless examples of decorators putting their skills to use to support worthy causes. While decorators typically undertake such initiatives because it's the right thing to do, there are often unintended positive results, which include gaining new business and strengthening ties with current clients. Here, read inspiring stories of how decorators are doing their bit to help those who need it most.

KOOPER'S TROOPERS

Sue Richins has a soft spot for children. So when the veteran embroiderer heard about the plight of a semi-paralyzed local toddler, she put her sewing needle to work to help.

Kooper Creley, 2 ½ years old, was born with spina bifida, a congenital disorder that rendered him paralyzed from the waist down. After Kooper's parents, Casey and Krystle, learned that non-embryonic stem cell therapy might help their son walk, they determined to get him the treatment. But since it isn't available in the U.S., the Creleys looked abroad, eventually deciding to go to China for help. The snag? The estimated cost of treatment and travel expenses topped \$40,000.

To generate the necessary cash, the Creleys began holding fundraisers. And that's where Richins and her embroidery machine came in. The co-owner of Mimbres, NM-based Sew What? Custom Embroidery stitched and donated four dozen caps to the Creleys, who sold them at a fundraiser. "Kooper's Troopers" was stitched on the front of the hat along with two baby footprints, while the back featured the message: "Helping Kooper Walk One Step At A Time."

Selling out in one night, the caps generated nearly \$700 – part of the cost of a plane ticket, says Crystle, who notes Richins later sold a batch of three dozen caps to her at cost. "It helped us tremendously," says Crystle, whose family was due to travel to China in late summer. "The donations and discounted hats meant the sales were very profitable."

While Richins wasn't angling for new business with the donation, she got some anyway. At the fundraising event where the caps were sold, attendees saw a poster that explained that Sew What? had donated the headwear. Richins' business cards were also handed out. The upshot was that an auto repair business, a propane company and others in the Creleys' small town started bringing business to Richins. "I picked up a bunch of customers – I didn't expect it," she says. "I just like to donate to help kids."



Sew What? Custom Embroidery stitched and donated four dozen caps like this to a couple who sold them to raise money to help pay for spina bifida treatment for their 2 ½-year-old son.

'KINGA MALARIA'

One of the leading causes of death in Kenya, malaria annually kills an estimated 34,000 children under the age of five. Every Life Inc., however, is working to lower that number.

For several years now, founder Brenda Kaker and others from the Wheatridge, CO-based organization have traveled to Kenya to run malaria education campaigns and other community initiatives to help improve the lives of local people. When Kaker and her companions visit homes throughout the Malindi District or teach prevention tips to rooms of schoolchildren, they wear shirts embellished by CB Designs LLC. On the white tees, the Arvada, CO-based shop digitally printed a logo that features a cartoon mosquito with a slash through it and the words "Kinga Malaria" – Swahili for "prevent malaria."

So far, CB Designs has contributed hundreds of shirts at cost to support the Every

Life cause. "It's neat to feel like you have a part in helping to better the health of a community," says CB Designs' Rose McAnany.

And help the shirts do. Both American campaigners and Kenyan volunteers wear the tees. Not only does this spread the malaria education message, but the uniform look between westerners and African volunteers makes it easier for the Americans to gain acceptance with the local population. Additionally, village elders – think of them like mayors – wear the shirts, which can influence locals to take the prevention tips seriously. Teachers, headmasters and schoolchildren, some of whom perform anti-malaria plays, also don the tees. "We're trying to empower the local people," Kaker says.

That effort extends to offering Kenyan women business and sewing classes at a women's center that Every Life built in 2008. To make the center self-sustaining,



CB Designs LLC digitally printed these logoed shirts to help bolster Every Life Inc.'s malaria awareness campaign in Kenya. "Kinga Malaria" means "Prevent Malaria" in Swahili.

Every Life is helping locals launch a specialty handbag-making business – Hope Center Designs. A world away in Colorado, CB Designs has been designing a label that would adorn the inside of the bags. "In our own small way, we want to help the people of Kenya," McAnany says.

OUR FALLEN HEROES

While on assignment in Mexico, federal agent Jaime Zapata was gunned down along a highway by strongmen for Las Zetas, a brutal drug cartel. Zapata, who served with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, was only 32 years old.

In the wake of the senseless slaying, Zapata's family has used embroidery to help the fallen hero's legacy live on. Stitch N Print Art Gallery, a Laredo, TX-based decorating company run by Zapata's cousin Horacio Yzaguirre and his wife, Blanca, created patriotic-themed embroidered portraits of Zapata. Donated to family and Zapata's fellow ICE agents, the portraits hang everywhere, from Stitch N Print's store to the homes of those who loved the slain young man. Additionally, Stitch N Print has given away 100 decorated shirts to family, memorial events, and the Webb County Sheriff's department. The shirts include polos with Zapata's embroidered portrait and tees with sublimated prints of the agent. Refusing to make money on Zapata's legacy, the Yzaguirres also donated 450 embroidered towels for a bowling tournament in their relative's honor.

For Blanca Yzaguirre and her husband, it was both harrowing and fulfilling to commemorate Zapata in stitches and prints. "It



Stitch N Print Art Gallery stitched this embroidered portrait of Jaime Zapata, a federal agent killed on duty in Mexico. The shop donated embroidered portraits of the national hero to Zapata's family and fellow agents.

was a relief to do something for him, but it was sad," Blanca says. "There's an emptiness. He was family. But when we saw the portrait and the logo stitching out, we were excited. It was like, 'Wow, it's coming out awesome. Jaime looks great.'"

The initial digitizing for Zapata's portrait was performed for free by Quality Punch, a Torrance, CA-based firm that specializes in digitizing embroidery portraits. "I never thought about charging them," says Co-Owner Karen Habe. "This young man was a hero. It was very touching to help honor him."

Elsewhere, other embroiderers have their machines humming in support of those who've paid a price for protecting America. Nancy Schwindenhammer, owner of The Magic Needle in Bartonville, IL, embroidered patriotic images – eagles, flags and more – on a dozen blankets that were sent to wounded veterans convalescing in military hospitals. The 50" x 60" blankets, which received more than 230,000 stitches, were bought and donated by

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Schwindenhammer and other women from the Limestone American Legion Auxiliary 979, where Schwindenhammer is a member and past president.

Not only did the blankets help keep servicemen and service-women warm, they also reminded the veterans how grateful

many Americans are for their sacrifice. Moreover, Schwindenhammer received free press out of the initiative, with the *Peoria Journal Star* featuring her and the stitching effort in an article. "It really gives you a good feeling to do this for the veterans," she says.

STITCHING TOWARD A CURE

"Hope. Promise. Cure." Carolyn Cagle embroidered this message, along with a pink ribbon, into fleece mittens her company, Strikke Knits, cuts and sews from scratch in Minnesota. The words and symbol carried, of course, a poignant message for survivors of cancer and their families and friends.

Since 2004, Cagle has created a line of custom mittens with similar anti-cancer themes. Often, Cagle sells the mittens at wholesale prices to activists – like those participating in Race For the Cure events – who sell the gloves at a mark-up and donate the proceeds to fund cancer research.

In other instances, the gloves are personalized for survivors and other individuals who want them, with the initials of lost loved ones sometimes stitched into the fleece. Cagle knit one such pair for a life-long buddy who had recently lost her good friend to cancer. "It's the saddest thing in the world doing a memorial pair, but I wanted to do it for my friend," Cagle says.

For her part, Cagle donates 10% of all sales from her special line to Susan G. Komen For The Cure, a breast cancer organization. "There are pertinent ways small embroidery businesses can contribute to their communities, and I wanted to give back," says Cagle, who was once interviewed by the My Talk 107.1 radio station after sending Kevyn Burger, a female DJ who'd beaten breast cancer, a pair of mittens.

While Cagle began stitching the gloves to help friends raise money, the cause recently hit closer to home when one of her sewers was diagnosed with breast cancer. "It makes you want to do everything you can to help," she says.

JoAnn Straub feels the same way. The owner of Franklin, PA-based Stitch'n To Go has used her embroidery skills to aid the outreach efforts of Lindsay Watson, a teenager who suffered from a rare form of cancer as a child. Initially, Straub donated embroidered shirts that were sold to help raise funds for the girl's medical care. So Lindsay could cover her head while undergoing treatment, Straub knit her a fleece beanie.

Pleased with the hat, Watson thought the headwear would make a great gift to other pediatric oncology patients. Straub thought so too. Over the years, she has been more than willing to sew the hats – never charging a penny – so that Lindsay, now cancer-free, can give them to child patients at the Cleveland Clinic. "Lindsay calls it the Warm and Fuzzy Club," says Straub, noting the hats may be personalized with initials or feature cartoon characters. "She puts a little tag in them that says, 'You're now part of the Warm and Fuzzy Club. Think only warm and fuzzy thoughts.'"

PROMOTE YOUR GOODWILL

We get it: Your apparel-decorating business supports worthy causes because it's the right thing to do, not to get a pat on the back. But many decorators don't do enough to promote their altruistic acts, which can amount to missed opportunities, as the positive perception philanthropic acts create may entice new customers and strengthen ties with existing clients. Here are some ways to promote your good-doing without going over the top:

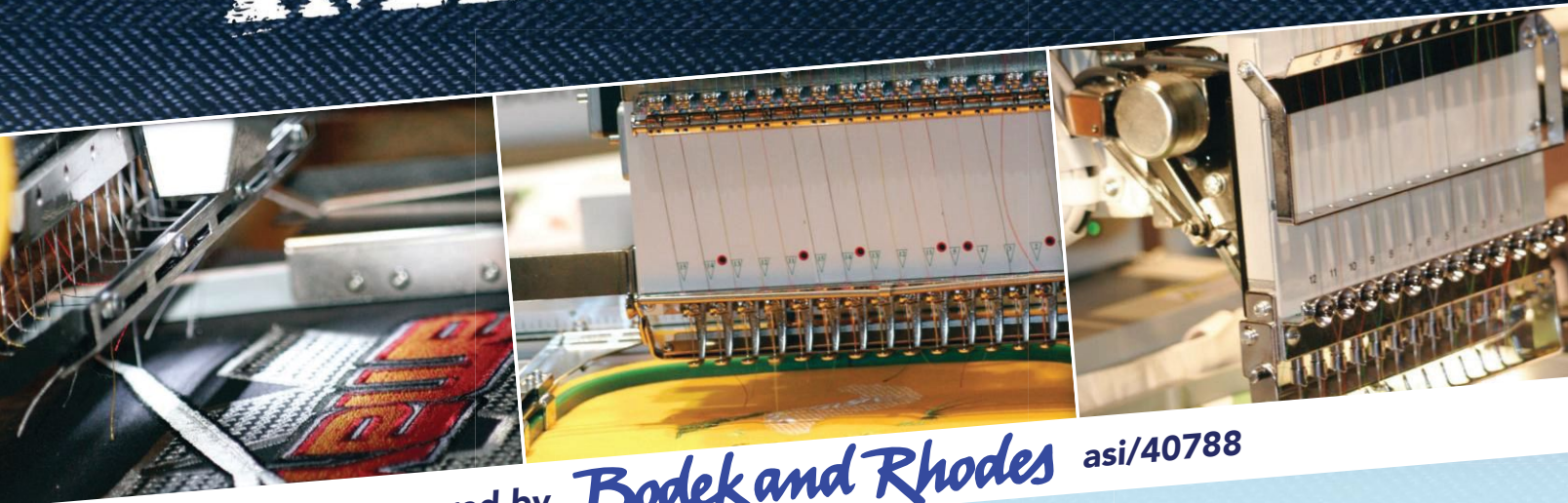
- 1. Create a "Good Works" section on your website:** This section should feature pictures, descriptions, and, if possible, videos of altruistic initiatives your shop has undertaken. Make sure there's a prominently displayed header on your home page – call it "Charity Works," "Caring for the Community," whatever – that links to the section so people know it's there.
- 2. Reach out through social media:** Social media platforms are great outlets to let people know about your good works. Let's say you donated decorated shirts to a cancer awareness event. Well, snap a picture of people wearing the tees and post it, along with a short description of what you did, to your Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest accounts. If you want to go a step further, film an interview with an organizer in which he or she discusses the event and mentions how the donated apparel helped the cause. Then, post the video to YouTube and drop a link to it on your social media pages.
- 3. Broadcast from your business card:** If you sponsor or support a certain cause or charity, say so on your business card. It only takes a little line on the bottom or the back: "Proud Sponsor of Toys for Tots," for example.
- 4. Outfit your shop space:** In your shop, display pictures or samples of apparel that pertain to your charity/community work. Customers could ask about them, and you'd have a chance to talk about your philanthropy.



JoAnn Straub, owner of Stitch'n To Go, sews fleece hats like this free of charge for Lindsay Watson, a brave-as-can-be teenage cancer survivor who gives them to pediatric oncology patients at the Cleveland Clinic.

CHRISTOPHER RUVO is a staff writer for *Stitches*; contact him at cruvo@asicentral.com.

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Coming Next Issue

What's coming up in January *Stitches*

By Nicole Rollender

Make Over Your E-Commerce Site

■ We take a look at some of the hottest e-commerce site features that big brands are using and ask experts to weigh in on how you can add these special features to your site – and rev up your sales.

Your Online Success Guide

■ From insider tools on the big three networking sites, to SEO smarts, to using gamification tools and custom apps to connect with customers, we've got the tech know-how you need to tune up your online efforts in 2013.

Plus ...

- 10 ways to build your decorated-apparel business
- How to pitch embroidery to reluctant buyers
- Top 2013 fashion trends



needle watch

Needle Patrol



Our friend Slick (an embroidery machine needle) has hidden himself somewhere in this issue. He might be in an editorial photo, graphic or text – he's not in an advertisement. If you find the needle, send us a note that says, "I found the December needle on page XX," along with your name, company, address and phone number (or e-mail address) so we can contact you if you're the winner. Mail or fax it to us at **Stitches, Attn: Needle Patrol**, 4800 Street Rd., Trevose, PA 19053; fax: (215) 953-3107. Also, tell us a little about your business. No phone calls please; you must respond in writing. Hurry! Responses for the December needle are due by December 31. From the correct responses, we'll randomly select one winner who'll receive a \$100 gift certificate, courtesy of **MADERA** Laconia, NH. Please submit only one entry per drawing. We'll announce the winner in the February 2013 issue.

Slick Has It In The Bag

In the September/October issue, Slick hid in the "LookBook" department – he's in the "Dyna Wireless" imprinted shoulder bag (WBA-SN10) from Ariel Premium Supply (asi/36730) on page 25. **Richard Silva** of Jacksonville, FL-based **Eye Candy Designs** was chosen at random from a grand total of 45 responses. As this issue's winner, Richard will receive Madeira USA's gift certificate. Keep your eyes peeled for the industry's favorite game of hide and seek!



By Erich Campbell



Got a decorator dilemma? E-mail your question to nroller@asicentral.com. We'll request your permission to print your question and our expert's response in *Stitches*. Note: Unfortunately, we're unable to answer each individual question.

QI've just started digitizing, and though I know a bit from having run an embroidery machine, I'm not sure that I have a good handle on what it takes to make a "perfect" design. I don't want the design to cause thread breaks or for the finished design to have gaps, but what does it mean for a design to be ideally production-friendly?

AYou're right to think that there's more to production-friendly digitizing than just avoiding thread breaks. While it's imperative that our designs look good – that they stay in registration, cover the underlying garment sufficiently, have smooth edges, keep lettering legible and more – it's much more than simply making sure things don't noticeably fall apart when stitched. As a machine operator, you likely noticed intuitively those designs that ran effortlessly – that they "flow" and seem "fast" for their size. In this column, we'll highlight two characteristics that make designs easy, efficient and even pleasurable to run.

1. Appropriate, balanced densities. Though it's incredibly important to cover the base fabric and to make sure underlying elements don't peek through, far too many digitizers rely on tightly packing their top stitching to achieve complete coverage. Excess density will cover the fabric, but it increases run time and distorts substrates. With proper underlay, you can reduce your densities, making for both a faster run and a softer hand for your garment. You'll find that using long, structured underlay stitches that lift the top stitching above the substrate minimizes show-through. You should always attempt to use the minimum density needed for coverage. The best designs are tailored to the specific fabric and color combinations of a particular run. This is one reason why stock designs sometimes fail on certain garments and colors. Though high-contrast color combinations and high-nap fabrics sometimes call for higher densities, those densities are overkill on tone-on-tone applications or smoother fabrics. With so many digitizers making bulletproof designs, this is both a quality and production-friendliness issue.

2. Logical, efficient pathing. Pathing refers to the sequence in which elements stitch, taking the placement of the start and stop points of each element into account. A well-pathed design will travel between elements with the fewest number of jumps and trims possible, using runs of straight stitches called traveling stitches to connect distant elements. These trav-

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els are usually hidden by elements stitched over them later in the sequence. Color changes are also kept to a minimum, meaning that in an ideal design, each color change is made up of a single, unbroken strand, and each color is only used once unless a second application is absolutely necessary. Proper pathing minimizes excessive, time-consuming machine movement.

Color changes and trims are slow processes, carrying with them the largest risk of thread breaks (due to small lock stitches) and rethreading (due to threads pulling out of needles during the color-change process); avoiding them where possible almost always speeds production. This is especially evident with large orders, where the savings garnered from efficient running stack up quickly. Eliminating excess trims also decreases fin-

Proper pathing minimizes excessive, time-consuming machine movement.

ishing time. Fewer trims means fewer thread tails to remove and less chance of sew-over. If you have trouble picturing your path, imagine coloring each color change in your design without picking up your mental crayon; if you start every design with this exercise, you're sure to develop a feeling for the most efficient route.

It may seem like I've overly essentialized the process; certainly neither of these qualities will save your designs if you don't understand pull compensation, minimum stitch lengths, or how to digitize small, legible lettering. That said, there's no shortage of digitizers who exceed at artistic interpretation and falter in making designs that run well and efficiently. It's easy to forget the nuts and bolts of digitizing while you're trying to create something beautiful. Though you should never stop trying to create attractive and innovative interpretations, starting with a dedication to efficient movement and conservative stitching use will ensure your eventual masterpiece is beautiful and profitable. ■

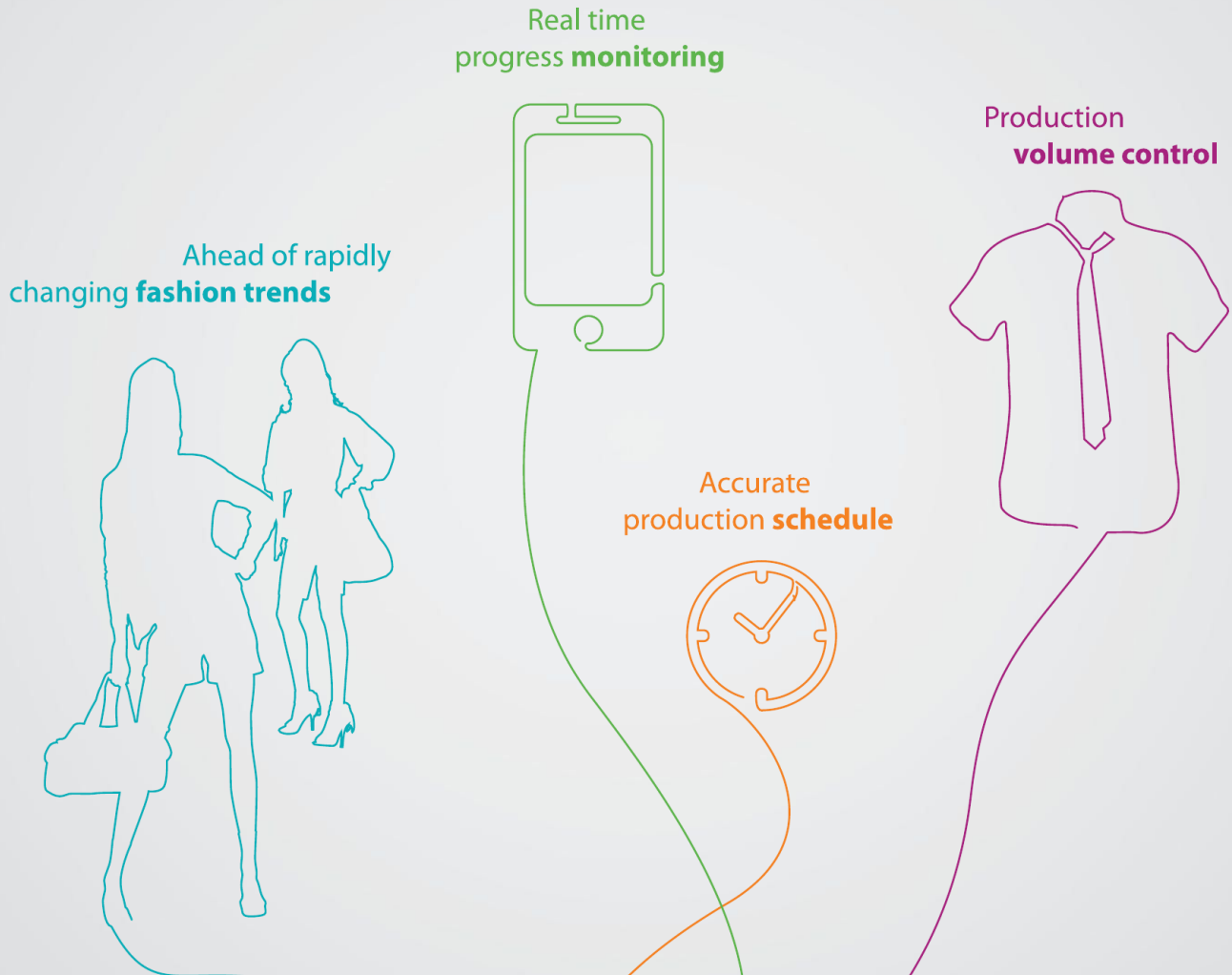
ERICH CAMPBELL, an industry veteran, is an award-winning embroidery digitizer with experience in designing, implementing and maintaining e-commerce websites. A long-time technology fan, ad-hoc IT staffer and constantly-connected Internet dweller, Campbell is in the process of adding social media to the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

Looking Forward

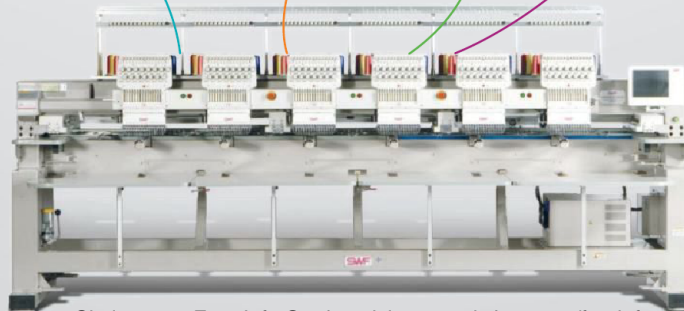
In the next issue, you'll learn how to sell embroidery over other decorating options to showcase your client's brand. See you next issue!

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