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Embroidery's Voice & Vision

July 2012

2012 Software Guide

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management
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with new art software



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FEATURES

FEATURES

45 Annual Software Guide

You can find the newest and most upgraded business-management, digitizing and graphics, monogramming and lettering, and more software - with real user reviews - in this software section.

BY SARA LAVENDUSKI,
NICOLE ROLLENDER AND
CHRISTOPHER RUVO

**56 The Body Art and
Stitch Connection**

A small, but growing, number of small-business owners offer tattooing and apparel decoration under one roof. We go inside their shops and explore the relationship between skin and apparel art.

BY CHRISTOPHER RUVO



COVER STORY

40 Smart Software Investments

Planning to invest in software or other technology to offer more digitizing/artwork services, organize your orders or just pump up your shop's overall productivity? We break down what you need to know before you buy - with advice from top industry vendors and decorators who've made successful purchases.

BY CHRISTOPHER RUVO

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Stitches Editor Nicole Rollender talks about questions you should ask potential software vendors 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 videos.



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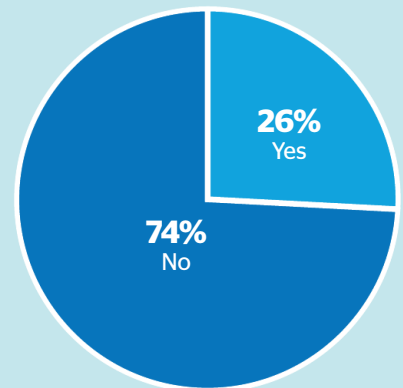
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Your Bottom Line

In a recent poll on ASICentral.com, we asked industry professionals: Is Facebook a good medium for paid advertising?

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of respondents think paid ads on Facebook aren't effective. Get educated: Turn to page 40 to learn about smart software and technology investments that will enhance your decorated-apparel business.





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contributors



In this month's "Punching Sense," **BONNIE LANDSBERGER**, owner of Cannon Falls, MN-based Moonlight Design, tackles the all-too-common issue of a digitizer receiving non-vector or unclear artwork for a rush order – but still needing to deliver a quality punched file for sewing. When you're first reviewing the artwork and have questions, "make it easy for your embroiderer to consult with the end-client," Landsberger writes. "Use the submitted artwork to associate each question you have with a number. That will make it much easier for the embroiderer to be the go-between for you and the end-customer."



In this issue's "Shop Stories," we interview **MIKE ANGEL**, vice president of sales and marketing at Melco, and he gives us his take on what makes a top-notch team, the latest Melco innovations and the industry's top challenges, and more. On being profitable in this industry, Angel says, "Understanding what your end-customers need and then providing solutions to those needs is key to success in this industry. It may sound cliché, but many businesses fall short and force their processes on the clients, trying to take shortcuts."



In this issue's "Ask An Expert," **ED LEVY**, director of software products at Hirsch International and owner of Montoursville, PA-based Digitize4U, answers a reader's question about how to expertly invest in new decorating equipment if you haven't purchased any recently. "There have been a number of great enhancements to embroidery machines over the past five years that make it easy to diversify without leaving your embroidery roots," Levy says. "There are several attachments available for embroidery machines that turn ordinary embroidery into extraordinary creations. For example, a sequin attachment lets you add single-color or multicolor sequins, in a variety of sizes, directly on the garment being embroidered. A laser attachment provides the ability to cut material of all types as part of the production process."

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Embroidery's Voice & Vision

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effective strategies to increase your decorated apparel sales – and your bottom line.

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About the Cover

The team at Torrance, CA-based Quality Punch digitized and stitched the delicate hummingbird design on this month's cover. Working with Madeira rayon thread, Quality Punch used a Tajima single-head to bring the 50,000-stitch design to life.

With only three days to complete the project, the Quality Punch team flexed its creative muscles to overcome the unique challenges the original artwork presented. Senior Digitizer Khurram Ali, for example, worked meticulously to ensure the colors would blend correctly. “We had to make sure the correct colors were used and blended nicely,” says Co-owner Karen Habe. “There were many more colors in the actual artwork, so we had eliminated some colors.”

With 39 color changes, the embroidered work took approximately two hours to sew. Featuring about 20 colors, including various shades of pink/purple and yellow/orange, Quality Punch had to carefully select the right colors on the machine. “We also had to make sure the sequencing was done correctly to avoid puckering,” Habe says.

Still, the careful attention to detail was worth it for Quality Punch, which specializes in blendings and animals designs. “It's a beautiful bird,” Habe says. “The bird had to be perfect and look outstanding since it's the focal point, other than the flower, on the cover. This was very interesting and challenging.”

The bird design could make an attractive apparel or accessory embellishment for pet owners and other animal lovers. “Since these are personal embroideries, customers pay a good price for them,” Habe says.

If you're ever attempting a similar stitch project, Habe advises patience. “The color tones have to be perfect,” she says, “and it won't be like an easy-to-sew corporate logo.” – *Christopher Ruvo*



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Embroidery's Voice & Vision

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It's expected that we can do business from anywhere.



Nicole Rollender
nrollender@asicentral.com

My 3-year-old navigates our iPad

with frightening ease, choosing Netflix movies, using interactive games and answering Skype video calls. I didn't have my first e-mail address until high school, or my first Motorola StarTAC cell phone until I graduated college. When I was in line to buy my first smartphone a few years ago, I was thrilled with myself – until I saw a 10-year-old “trading up” to the same phone. In 2012, most of us, even the very young, are connected 24/7 in a very mobile way.

It's expected that we can do business from anywhere: On my little pink smartphone, as an editor, I can answer e-mail, Skype, capture pictures, audio and video files and share them, write stories, surf the Internet, and post to Twitter and Facebook. With the variety of smartphones and tablets (and the nearly 1 million apps for Apple and Android devices) available, it makes good business sense to invest in one for your decorated-apparel company.

You probably have e-mail access and social networking apps on your device, so here are three other app types to make your business more mobile. There are lots of free apps – including an Apple app for *Stitches* – you can try; then, if you want to, you can upgrade to paid versions that offer more features:

- 1. Getting from here to there.** If you're on the road frequently, Jimmy Lamb, manager of education and communications for Sawgrass Technologies, recommends getting Google Maps Navigation or Waze for iPhones or Androids, which turns your phone into a GPS with live maps, real-time traffic updates and turn-by-turn navigation. “These are important for a decorator who's on the road a lot visiting customers,” he says.
- 2. Online file storage.** Apps like Dropbox and Box let you store bulky artwork and presentation files in the cloud – you can access them from anywhere on your smartphone or tablet for sales calls.
- 3. Financials and mobile payment.** First, download your financial institution's app for convenience. “If you're a PayPal user, its app gives you access to all your transactions and also allows invoicing,” Lamb says. When you want to get paid, you can turn your phone into a mobile credit card swiper with a card reader and app from SquareUp.

This issue's cover story, “Smart Software Investments,” overviews four types of software you can purchase to run your business better and diversify your offerings, and our “Annual Software Guide” section features 26 software packages with user reviews.

We hope you get some great tech ideas!

We Asked Our Editorial Advisory Board ...

What app should decorators have on their smartphones or tablets to help them do business better?



Steve Freeman, Qdigitizing.com (asi/700501): “A must-have app is a good calendar/reminder. I use this all the time now. It syncs with my exchange server; it's invaluable.”



Jimmy Lamb, Sawgrass Technologies: “E-business cards are gaining traction. The Bump app lets you exchange e-biz cards with someone else who also has

Bump by tapping your phones together. I also use CamCard for Android for scanning business cards via my phone's camera. It uses an OCR program to recognize and convert the text. Paid versions allow you to transfer the data to Microsoft Outlook databases.”



Ginny Fineberg, Sandpiper Embroidery: “I take pictures of garments and other products every day and e-mail them to customers.

If I get a damaged good from a distributor customer or supplier, I take a picture of the damage and send it to them. It speeds up the process. You can also use Snap Camera to take pictures, add notes and then save the picture with the notes overlaid on the image.”



Howard Potter, A & P Master Images: “You should have Skype on your phone or tablet. It helps you be more personal with your customers, whether you're in the

office or not. It allows you to have face-to-face contact and show product or proofs. Just having that app can help you to increase sales by a minimum of 10% with existing customers.”



Lee Romano Sequeira, Sparkle Plenty Designs (asi/88442): “My true must-have apps are my social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) and my e-mail accounts – so I can communicate anywhere, anytime.”



Jane Swanzy, Swan Marketing LLC (asi/700627): “An online file storage app like Dropbox so you can access files while you're away from your computer.”

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LIFE-SAVING STITCHING

From therapeutic recovery after trauma, to healing self-expression after abuse, to fulfilling second careers following life-changing events, we take a look at how embroidery has played a life-saving role in people's lives.

By Christopher Plano

Geri Finio says embroidery might have saved her life. Finio, the owner of Studio 187, a Moorestown, NJ-based custom embroidery studio, endured a childhood of severe abuse. But even during the darkest times, Finio found peace in embroidery. "It was a great way to escape," she says. "I loved the methodical aspect of stitching. I could relax and feel calm in a chaotic world."

Refusing to be defined by childhood trauma, Finio forged forward into a successful career in corporate computer technology and, with the help of therapy, underwent a healing process that, she says, turned her into "probably one of the most mentally healthy people you'll meet." Through it all, embroidery was a constant, the bedrock she fell back on for comfort, stabilization and creative release. About five years ago, Finio turned her life-

long passion into her full-time job, launching a stitching business that produces artisanal creations of unique sewing and hand and machine embroidery. "Embroidery has always been my salvation," Finio says.

She isn't alone in saying so. The stitching industry is full of inspiring stories of people who, aided by embroidery, have overcome personal trauma and prospered. Perhaps it's no surprise that stitching has played such a role in many lives. Art therapists have used sewing and embroidery to help everyone from juvenile offenders to adults suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Erica Curtis, a Santa Monica, CA-based art therapist, says the embroidery process can be therapeutic. "There's something inherently soothing in the repetitive process of sewing and embroidery," Curtis says. (See "Embroidery 4: Art Therapy" sidebar on page 41.)

The following two letters are in response to our June article "Life-Saving Stitching," in which we profiled people who've used embroidery to move past traumatic events in their lives.

Finally Fulfilled

The embroidery business didn't mend a medical condition for me, but it got me out of a serious financial struggle. It also helped me combine my skills into one satisfying, ever-changing business: retail, sales, art, technology and management. I took an "in-between-careers" job at an embroidery shop that led to a defined, perfect career choice of fulfilled self-employment.

When one of my daughters moved with her father to another state, the child support arrangement had to be sorted out, since my ex and I each had custody of one child. It took nine months to resolve. Although diverse and satisfying, the income from

the embroidery job didn't cover household expenses. So I started my own business. Fifteen years later, I've carved out several niche markets for my business and have expanded mainly through word-of-mouth.

Marjorie Corrow

Life's a Stitch Embroidery

Family Affair

There has been too much water under the bridge, or too many needle strikes, for me to summarize how embroidery has impacted my life. I started my company in 1958 with one single-needle, chain-stitch embroidery machine. I'm now running 200-plus embroidery heads, usually two shifts a day, and I'm having too much fun quietly producing ultra-high-quality contract embroidery and emblems, primarily for ASI customers. You've probably never heard of us, and that's OK; our

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goal is to make heroes out of our customers. Were it not for my wife Pauline, our daughter Debbie with her contributions to the operation and our son Randy with his unbelievable talents and highly devoted customer-oriented attitude watching over a terrific staff, we couldn't have lasted these 54 years.

Ed Sheinberg
Texas Art Embroidery Co.

Thank You For 25 Years!

I began digitizing in 1986. We didn't have the Internet for quick answers, and there was little help for digitizing in the trade magazines that focused on the decorated-apparel industry. Because there were few embroidery events that offered training for punching, we were pretty much on our

own. It was a frustrating period of trial-and-error attempts, with projects taking sometimes a month to polish.

But the following year, the clouds began to clear when my boss handed me the very first issue of *Stitches*. So many of the questions I'd struggled to resolve were answered. Ten years later, I was invited to write an article. I was happy to share what I could to spare new digitizers the frustrations I'd experienced. I've continued to write, working under every *Stitches* editor, all of whom have keyed into readers' needs and helped make this magazine a vital part of the industry.

I thank all staff members and contributors whose articles have taught me so much. Thanks also to the readers who contributed to my articles – I've learned

from you as well. Our industry has come very far in the last 25 years, and it has much to do with the networking created by this publication. So, with sincere gratitude, congratulations *Stitches* on 25 years, and I wish you many, many more!

Bonnie Landsberger
Moonlight Design Embroidery Digitizing

Working The Local Market

I've been operating a home-based sewing machine embroidery business for over eight years. I have three single-head machines, two of which are digital. I'm semi-retired from the business, and I'm now doing jobs for local organizations and individuals.

Beverly Squibb
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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., Trevoise, 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,
I'm looking for chocolate brown and/or hot pink (raspberry) chef coats. Do you have any sources? - Barb

I've found some chef coats that may suit your clients well. Head to FIEL (*asi/53509*); (800) 851-3435; www.fiel.com and look for product CNDCH731P. Or, try product 345B from Intedge Manufacturing (*asi/62704*); (864) 969-9601; www.intedge.com. Finally, you might find the coat you need from Fits-U Accessories (*asi/54435*); (905) 760-2030; www.fits-u.com - product U589.

Hi Phil,
We're a screen-printing business, and I was wondering if you knew of a supplier that sells hooded sweatshirts with a plaid-lined hood for one of our college clients. - Karla

Check out product 8893 from J America (*asi/62977*); (866) 470-4536; www.jamericablanks.com. In addition, product 679 from Tri-Mountain (*asi/92125*); (800) 824-6464; www.trimountain.com might be the hoodie you need. To cover all your bases, head to Caplee Corp. (*asi/43798*); (800) 772-4716; www.capleecorp.com for product 11653.

Hi Phil,
We have a customer who used to purchase mock necks from us, but our supplier discontinued them. Do you have a source for a short-sleeve poly mock neck shirts in black? - Michelle

You don't have to stick your neck out too far to find what your customer needs. Try product 7400 from Dunbrooke (*asi/50930*); (800) 641-3627; www.dunbrooke.com; or take a gander at Guru Sportswear (*asi/58683*); (888) 345-4878; www.gurusportswear.com.

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com; specifically products 3066 and 4066. But the competition is fierce. Product 400 from TSC Apparel (*asi/90518*); (800) 289-5400; *www.tscapparel.com* is neck and neck with product Z1325 from Zorrel International (*asi/99550*); (800) 528-8688; *www.zorrel.com*.

Hi Phil,

With golf season coming up, I'm getting requests for short sport socks with either woven-in logos or decals. Any sources for this? - Zoe

Sock it to 'em! A variety of suppliers can help, including Pro Golf Premiums (*asi/79680*); (800) 890-6068; *www.progolfpremiums.com*. Also, go to Soyad Textiles (*asi/88403*); (800) 521-2860; *88403.asisupplier.com*, and check out Sports Solutions Inc. (*asi/88876*); (800) 257-4075; *www.nosweatspecialties.com* as well. One more option is Flagpin Products (*asi/54520*); (888) 334-9779; *www.flagpin.com*.

The following is adapted from a recent exchange on Phil's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/philstitch). Join the conversation!

Phil, please help! I need bright red, V-neck sweater vests. Do you have a good wholesale source? - Patricia

Don't sweat it. You can start with product 791 from Edwards Garment (*asi/51752*); (800) 253-9885; *www.edwardsgarment.com*. Or, paint the town red at Alpha Shirt Co. (*asi/34408*); (800) 523-4585; *www.alphashirt.com*; product D477 in particular. Finally, dress it up with products 1120 and C120-Red from Dress Code (*asi/48342*); (347) 828-7515; *www.dresscodesweaters.com*.



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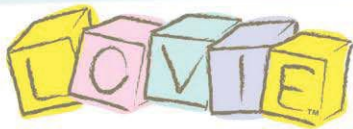
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by Sara Lavenduski

Mike Angel, vice president of sales and marketing at Melco, gives us his take on what makes a top-notch team, the latest Melco innovations and the industry's top challenges.

How did you get started in the decorated-apparel industry?

My career began in 1998 with Pantograms, which at the time was developing its own Windows-based software. I knew nothing about embroidery, but was excited at the opportunity to work in a new industry.

What's the first thing you do when you get to the office?

I check my day's schedule and fire up Skype, which I use to communicate with staff and our distributors all over the world.

Understanding what your end-customers need and then providing solutions to those needs is key to success in this industry.

What makes your team top-notch?

My team consists entirely of self-starters. We work in an environment that allows people to concentrate on what they do best – and my job is to support them with the tools and autonomy to succeed. We're inspired by the ability to offer state-of-the-art solutions that help our clients invest and succeed in their apparel-decorating businesses.

Our clients are primarily entrepreneur-based, so it's exciting and inspiring to be involved in that atmosphere as a career.



Starting or growing a business is one of the most positive projects any individual or company can experience, and it's an exciting process to be involved with every day.

What kinds of innovations do your machines currently feature?

Melco's AMAYA XTS embroidery machine has been engineered to meet a variety of production needs and budgets. The innovative features that set it apart are Acti-Feed, which provides a stitch speed of 1,500 stitches per minute and allows automatic tensioning, and a cylindrical lower arm that enables embroidery in small areas like shirt and bag pockets as well as increasing the stitch field on caps and visors to accommodate more products.

The AMAYA XTS operating system allows for multi-head networking, bar code reading and production feedback reporting that large decorating companies require. This feature also offers integration with our online design and e-commerce technology called LiveDesigner. Linking an online purchase, creating the decorating file and sending it to the machine are exclusive to us.

What's the business benefit of a decorator investing in an online design tool?

A decorator can now integrate online order processing that includes the production file. Any bitmap, vector or embroi-

dery file can be delivered directly to a decorator's production team when customers place online orders, eliminating many traditional manual steps and errors. This process also makes it profitable to offer no minimum quantities, something consumers continue to demand.

What do you want your customers to do to make your life easier?

Our clients are our number-one source for developing solutions. Customers taking advantage of our online social community at www.melcoworld.com is one of the ways we learn about the types of solutions that need to be developed. The more we understand what decorators need to be more profitable, the easier Melco's process to deliver solutions becomes.

What's the secret to being profitable in this industry?

Understanding what your end-customers need and then providing solutions to those needs is key to success in this industry. It may sound cliché, but many businesses fall short and force their processes on the clients, trying to take shortcuts. It may be hard work to deliver what customers are asking for, but if you do you'll help them succeed – and you'll succeed in the end.

What will be the industry's biggest challenge the second half of 2012?

An election year in the U.S., along with soaring fuel prices and a sluggish global economy, will add to investors' uncertainty. Without robust investment in particular by small businesses and entrepreneurs, it could make for a very tight 2012 in our industry.

Who's going to win the presidential election: Democrat, Republican or other?

I see an edge for the Democrats if the economy improves and fuel prices go back down.

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STITCHREPORT

Compiled by Joan Chaykin

SEW WHAT? The decorating dude opines

Embroidery Class A Success At RISD

Since coming to the United States in 2010,

Yoon Jeong Choi's life has been characterized by constant flux and change. Choi, a graduate student in the textiles department at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), felt the sense of permanent shifting was emblemized by the movement of shadows. The fine artist wanted to express the shadow metaphor in her work. Thanks in part to a crash course in digital embroidery, she achieved the feat with sterling results.

Choi was among the 12 students who took a six-week winter session class in digital embroidery at RISD, the nation's leading fine arts college located in Providence, RI. The course was the latest offering in RISD's burgeoning embroidery program, the foundation for which was laid in November 2010 when *Stitches* engineered a partnership between RISD, Madeira USA and Hirsch International to bring embroidery to the prestigious school. By teaching digital embroidery, RISD hoped to give students another tool for bringing their most creative ideas to life. "This gives our students a wonderful palette for drawing in thread," says Susan Sklarek, head of the textile department. "Our hope is students will be able to use embroidery either alone or in combination with printed, woven or knitted fabric."

That hope became a reality in a project Choi completed for the class. After photographing shadows outside, Choi uploaded the images and tweaked them. Then, she digitally printed the images onto fabric, over which she embroidered. The finished pieces were then mounted and displayed. The work as a whole demonstrates a breadth of design, from a piece featuring a brick-like pattern of purple, black and red over which circles with cross-like symbols are sewn to a zig-zagging geometric design of blue, red and gold thread. "There's a point where the light hits the embroidery and the shiny stitches come alive," Choi says. "I really enjoyed playing with densities to manipulate light effects."

Enamored with embroidery, Choi could incorporate the medium into future projects. "Digital embroidery was totally new territory, and I just loved doing it," she says. "I love the subtleness of texture that



Yoon Jeong Choi, a graduate student in the textiles department at the Rhode Island School of Design, created these pieces during a winter 2011-2012 session course in digital embroidery at the prestigious fine arts school.

embroidery creates. It invites people to look. Playing with densities was great because by adjusting them I could make embroidery connect to the background well, to where it wasn't just sitting on top."

Other student creations included: a series of flowers embroidered on fabric; a denim jacket with an all-over design; and even a bra with two rainbow-colored apples sewn on it. "I wanted to give the students a pragmatic skill set so they'd know how to work the machine," says Judith Solodkin, who taught the winter session. "But beyond that, I wanted them to be able to take what they learned and interpret that in the context of their own work."

A New York City-based fine arts printer and publisher with a background using digital embroidery as a high-art medium, Solodkin says the students worked with a Tajima TMEX 15-needle machine and Pulse software. To get a feel for the nuts and bolts of the embroidery process, students created a file in one stitch type and then converted it to many types to learn the limitations and advantages of each, among other exercises. "Learning embroidery not only connects students more broadly to the active art world; it gives them more abilities to work in the commercial textile world and be responsive to marketplace interest," Solodkin says.

And for those reasons, the embroidery work at RISD figures to continue. Next up, the college could offer a summer session workshop or course in the medium. "We see embroidery as another means of expression for helping our students to develop," Sklarek says.

Scan this code to read more of *Stitches* Staff Writer Christopher Ruvo's *Stitchwork* blog, which spotlights embroidery and related apparel decoration, offering everything from tips to unique stories about people in the industry.



LEARN IT LIVE!

Want to learn how to seize the power within you to lead a happier and more productive business and personal life? Then attend "Unlock & Unleash: The Power of Breakthroughs" on Tuesday, July 17 at The ASI Show Chicago. The all-day empowerment session, which begins at 9 a.m., will be led by Tony Robbins, a world-renowned authority on the psychology of leadership, negotiation, organizational turnaround and peak performance. During the energizing, interactive program, you'll learn everything from how to break through limiting beliefs to how to place yourself in peak states to achieve results beyond your dreams. Visit ASIShow.com to register.

VOILA! The best piece I ever embroidered Slam-Dunk Sublimation

Submitted by Brent Bolm, owner of Warrenton, MO-based Eagle Activewear; eagleact@centurytel.net



“A high school athletic director wanted to create a piece of apparel to celebrate the accomplishments of the basketball team, who were recently crowned conference champions. They chose a hoodie with a sublimation twill patch – the only caveat was to incorporate a drawing from a student that was submitted on a piece of notebook paper. The pencil sketch included the names of the players.

First, we converted the drawing to vector art to give us complete control over the quality across all processes. Since the direction was to create ‘something special,’ we knew a printed shirt wouldn’t suffice. That led us to decide to produce a sublimated patch and then sew it down with a satin stitch to make it pop.

Creating a sublimated patch involves several steps. After the art is prepared, we sublimated white twill. The design must be precision laser-cut to ensure the tack-down stitches meet correctly. In this case, digitizing was a quick process since we created vector art for the sublimation stage. The high school’s name drop under the twill was the only digitizing besides the tack-down along the edge of the twill.

The back of the hoodie illustrates the photographic capability of sublimation. Digital Art Solutions’ (asi/14970) Smart Designer CorelDRAW add-on tool allowed us to easily create the text and background. Then, we power-clipped the basketball into the shape of the state of Missouri to further personalize the piece. The addition of the 2010-2011 to the hood completed the project.

The school is now using the ‘E’ drawn by the student as one of its main logos. We were proud to deliver a piece that exceeded the client’s expectations in a surprisingly cost-effective manner.”

OOPS... How I screwed up and what I learned from it Simple Solutions

Submitted by Jane Swanzy, owner of Houston-based Swan Threads, a division of Swan Marketing LLC (asi/700627); jane@swanzy.com

“A customer brought me some Carhartt fleece jackets he bought on sale at Bass Pro Shop to be embroidered. I don’t mind working on customer-supplied garments if it’s something I can easily replace, but, of course, I couldn’t find this style or color to replace the jacket that my machine decided to have for lunch one day.

I carefully removed it from the machine and took out all the stitches. I only had a small hole, but it was on a jacket I couldn’t replace. After looking around my sewing room, I spotted a



product I had picked up at the International Quilt Festival the year before – Bo-Nash 007 Bonding Agent Powdered Fusible.

After reading the instructions, I applied it to the back of the jacket over the hole using a small piece of black mesh backing to stabilize it. Wow! The hole was barely visible. I enlarged the logo just a bit, moved it around a little to make sure the hole was completely stitched over, and the jacket was saved. This is just one of many sewing solutions that has helped me with my embroidery.”

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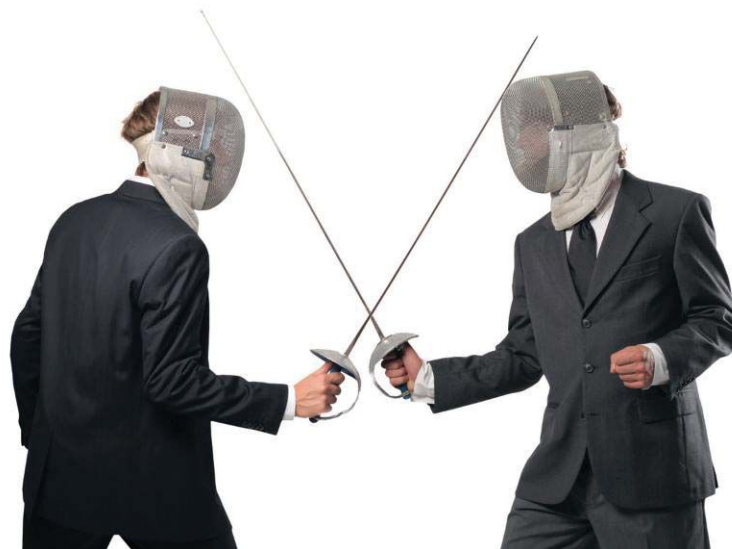
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STITCHREPORT

PROBLEM SOLVER

All's Fair In War

Industry experts weigh in on going after competitors' clients.



Q: "By nature, I'm competitive - that's partly why my decorated-apparel business, which also sells promotional products, is so successful. Is it unethical for me to pursue clients who already work with other decorators or ad specialty distributors?"
— *Tanya*

Bobby Lehew is friends with his biggest competitor in the Oklahoma City market. But that doesn't stop the chief branding officer of Robyn Promotions (*asi/309656*) from calling on businesses the other distributorship may work with, and vice versa. "Neither of us would think twice about it," Lehew says. "It's good, clean competition. It's a battle and we each want to win."

Many decorators and distributors take a like-minded view. Believing there's nothing unethical in the practice, they say calling on others' clients – and having your clients called on – is a fact of doing business. "We hope every day our sales associates are making cold calls on accounts being serviced by someone else," says J.P. Shea, sales coordinator at American Solutions for Business (*asi/120075*). He uses an analogy to explain ASB's position: "If you're driving a Chevy today, but you're in the market for a new car, and I'm a Ford rep, I'd be crazy not to at least ask you to consider what I have to offer."

Nonetheless, some question the ethics of pursuing others' clients. If Nina Shatz knows a competitor has a good working relationship with an organization, she says she won't court the prospect, as she believes doing so is unethical. "I don't think the call needs to be made," says Shatz, director of sales at Red Ball Promotions (*asi/346567*). Recently, a former colleague-turned-competitor started wooing one of Shatz's large accounts, continuing to call on the client even though the high-end business in the liquor industry repeatedly rebuffed his advances. While Shatz believes it's fine to solicit a business that is unhappy with its current provider, she feels that her competitor's rigorous courting of her client constitutes an ethical foul. "For me, it goes against the grain to keep pushing when clients show satisfaction with who they're already working with," she says.

NEWS BRIEFS

Bodek and Rhodes (*asi/40788*) has added SubliVie T-shirts to its product line. In addition, new colors, styles and accessories have been added to the company's offerings in tie-dye and vintage designs.

Bonnie Nielsen, an internationally-known embroidery designer, has authored a new book, *Punch - Digitizing For Embroidery Design*.

ColDesi Inc. has launched www.dtgprinter.com, a website exclusively dedicated to the DTG brand of direct-to-garment printers.

Hirsch International (*asi/14982*) has released the Auto Hoop, a pneumatic ribbon-holding device that holds tape in place for faster production.

Madeira USA announced that E-Zee Weblon No Show - a low-profile, soft and sheer cutaway backing - is available from the company's E-Zee Backing & Topping Division. Made of 100% embossed nylon, the backing offers low visibility and is designed specifically to be used on performance wear and moisture-wicking fabrics.

Pacific Emblem Co. has announced that its uZAPPit Smart Tag was given Best of Expo honors at the 2012 Promotional Products Expo.

ProTowels Etc. (*asi/79750*) has appointed Mandee Cheek as the new Southeast ProService Regional Contact. Cheek will support the states of AL, DC, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN and PR.

RNK Distributing offers Appli-Stitch Velvet Soft Fabric, a new textured material that speeds up the appliqué process. Appli-Stitch is designed to be used with the Appli-Stitch Design Collection or digitized appliqué designs created in Floriani Total Control Embroidery software using the Appli-Stitch feature.

Roland has announced that the VersaUV LEC printer/cutter line won a silver award at the 2012 Foil & Specialty Effects Association Golden Leaf Awards in Las Vegas.

SanMar (*asi/84863*) is opening a new warehouse in Minnesota to better serve customers in the Midwest. The supplier will operate out of a temporary facility until final construction is complete on the full-scale warehouse in summer 2013.

TSC Apparel (*asi/90518*) announced the grand opening of its new distribution center in Dayton, NJ. The addition of this northeast location complements TSC's other centers in Cincinnati, Atlanta, Houston and Fullerton, CA.

Vantage Apparel (*asi/93390*) has promoted Marci Newsom and Jeff DePalma to regional sales manager positions. The supplier has also hired Mark Thieleke as its sales representative for NC, SC, TN and WV.

CALENDAR

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July 17-19, Chicago

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

July 27-28, Nashville

Embroidery Mart - EAST
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www.nnep.net

AUGUST 2012

Aug. 8-9, Long Beach, CA

The SAAC Show
(805) 484-7393;
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Aug. 21, Bloomington, MN

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STITCHREPORT

MY 10 FAVORITE THINGS



CHRIS BLAKESLEE

is vice president of sales for Broder Bros. Co. (asi/42090).

1. My Mountain Bike:

For the places the Jeep can't quite go, I find nothing gets the blood flowing (sometimes literally) like going downhill fast in the woods. I ride the Specialized Stumpjumper Expert EVO.



2. My Car:

The Jeep Wrangler Unlimited. You never know where life, or adventure, will take you! Better have a car that can get you there.



image courtesy of Consumer Reports



3. Briggs & Riley Travelware:

When you travel 200-plus nights per year, luggage is gear, not an accessory. It has to be utilitarian, near-indestructible and efficient. My favorite is the B&R upright garment bag - half suitcase, half garment bag. Genius!



4. To Boot New York Shoes:

As a guy, if there's one aspect of style to focus on, it has to be shoes. I like lots of brands, but To Boot is my favorite so far. Nice job, Adam Derrick (he's To Boot's designer and footwear specialist!)

5. Neal Family Cabernet Sauvignon:

My favorite red wine (although not my usual). It's a little pricey, but worth it for a special occasion. I find it pairs well with a good book, a nice dinner or just spending a quiet evening at home with my family.



6. My iPhone:

After nine years on a BlackBerry, I finally switched in late 2011. Now I understand why RIM is almost out of business.



7. Ocean City, MD:

I grew up going to Ocean City in the summer. In 2009, my wife and I bought a summer home there. This past summer, we filled a guest book with the names of friends and family who came to stay. Nothing better!

8. Diana Krall

(and jazz in general): Jazz is easily my favorite genre of music. Diana Krall happens to be my favorite within the favorite. Mixed with red wine and perhaps spending time at the beach - that's what I call R&R!



9. Jeans and a T-shirt (in top photo):

My alter-ego's weekend uniform. Maybe it's obligatory since I work for a company that distributes more T-shirts in a year than there are people in the U.S. In the picture, I'm wearing the Alternative 1075. And yes, we sell that one.



10. An Egg-White Omelette:

Considering I eat this almost every morning, it must be one of my favorite things. Healthy, light and packed with protein - everything a growing boy needs!



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by Julie A. Cajigas

TREND ALERT FROM NEW ORLEANS *fashion* WEEK



Skip Bolen

A Hint of Vintage

This model from the Loretta Jane Presentation at the Martine Chaisson Gallery during the fall 2012 New Orleans/NOLA Fashion Week is sporting a chic, corporate look with runway flair. Her sleeveless top features a fun and funky telephone pattern on a muted burgundy shade, perfect for an office setting, over a pair of neutral black tailored slacks. The look is finished with a black silk bow and a fanciful fascinator headpiece. Corporate-friendly garments can be embellished for fall with step-repeat pattern decorations created with beading or embroidery. Patterned scrubs, health-care uniforms and fabrics will also see an increase in popularity, emulating the retail trend. Logoed accessories from silk scarves and ties to hair clips and bags can add to the polished look of an outfit, but instead of over-accessorizing, the looks on the NOLA runway focus on one or two key accessories to create understated ensembles with a touch of vintage.

GET THE LOOK



SCARF TIE: A classic corporate accessory, this understated silk tie can be worn in a loose bow that emulates the sewn-on tie the NOLA Fashion Week model is sporting, or it can be fashioned into a variety of smaller bows and knots for an elegant look.

Available from Wolfmark (*asi/98085*; circle 153 on Free Info Card); (800) 621-3435; www.wolfmarkties.com



PLAYFUL PRINT: Your clients can emulate this runway look with Fast Lane Clothing Co.'s (*asi/53753*) sleeveless floral print top. The tropical print is fun and fashionable, and can be worn with jeans or khakis for a casual look or slacks and a cardigan for a dressier look.

Available from Fast Lane Clothing Co. (*asi/53753*; circle 151 on Free Info Card); (800) 959-0126; www.toucandance.com



FASCINATOR: Whether you're British royalty, a Kentucky Derby fan or a fashionista, fascinators and other hair decorations have been all the rage for several seasons. This floral fascinator is great as a giveaway or party favor, and can add a touch of flair to any outfit.

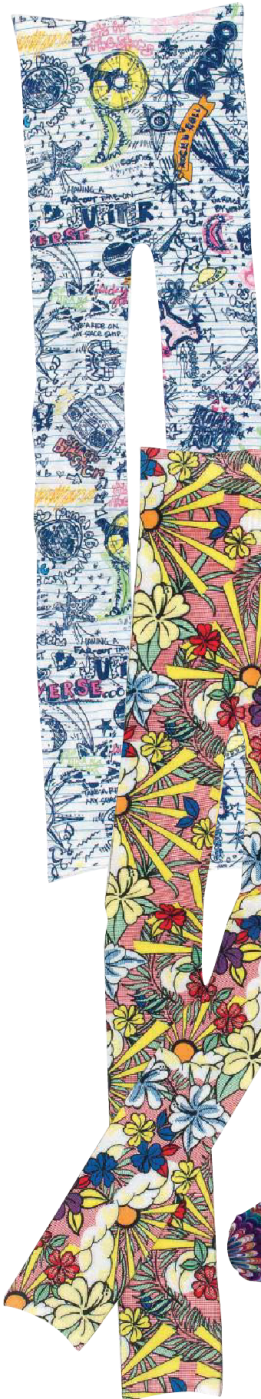
Available from Brighter Promotions Inc. (*asi/42016*; circle 152 on Free Info Card); (847) 403-0100; www.brighterpromotions.com



ADD-ON SALE: The Kismet earrings from Diane Katzman Design (*asi/63988*; circle 170 on Free Info Card) feature a silver glass pearl hanging from linked rings of black metal and acrylic.

ACCESSORY SPOTLIGHT

Luxe Leggings



Available from
 Celeste Stein Designs
 Inc. (asi/44372;
 circle 154 on Free
 Info Card); (409)
 763-1009; www.
 celestestein.com

To capitalize on the print and pattern trends on fall 2012 runways, decorators can easily add custom leggings to their apparel sales. And, sifting through the 2,000 designs in the Celeste Stein Designs (asi/44372) leggings library can definitely get decorators' creative juices flowing. Whether your clients want a pineapple, a pinup, images from the Sistine Chapel ceiling, photo-realistic tigers, Elvis or an intricate lace pattern on their leggings, there's something for everyone – along with totally custom designs.

Dori Golan, president of Celeste Stein Designs, remembers watching her mother, Celeste Stein, create custom leggings in their garage more than 20 years ago. Now, Golan and her mother head up established apparel manufacturer Celeste Stein Designs, which specializes in haute hosiery from lace tights to its new line of fleece leggings in up to size 4XL.

With its huge print library and the ability to do custom prints, Celeste Stein Designs is quickly becoming a well-known name in leggings in the retail and wholesale markets. "We've created custom tattoo-like logo tights for Bacardi's Mardi Gras dancers," says Golan, who also has done work for Victoria's Secret. "We added glitter to Lurex tights and printed the Bacardi logo down the side of the leg."

The innovative company also recently released a brand-new line of decorated compression socks. "We don't see anyone else decorating compression socks," says Golan, who's currently creating custom socks for an airline to give away to first-class customers, with its logo printed on the calf just below the band.

HOT HUE

Pink Flambé



Headlining Pantone's fall color report, Pink Flambé is a "delicious, vibrant pink with a bit of heat to it." The shade, and Pantone's fall color lineup, is part of a palette inspired by love potions, sunsets, witches, warlocks, fantasy and illusion. Pink Flambé (Pantone 18-2133) is a versatile shade that can be paired with juicy orange and honey yellow for a bright, flirtatious look or with deep purples and greens for a cooler, calmer color story.

It's great as a pop of color or an allover shade; your clients can wrap themselves in the vibrant pink hue with a garment-dyed hoodie dress from Blanks Plus (asi/40642). Crafted of lightweight micro jersey, this long-sleeve hoodie dress is short and sexy, but still ideal for cool fall weather. The low-cut neckline leverages the deep V-neck trend that has been popular since last fall. Pair this pink frock with a tangerine print scarf or a bright yellow bag to complete the look.

Available from Blanks Plus (asi/40642;
 circle 155 on Free Info Card); (213) 629-
 0006; www.blanksplus.net

DECORATION NATION

Embroidered Pillowcases

Cool home-based company Comfy Cozy adds glow-in-the-dark, hand screen-printed designs to pillowcases and nightshirts. A fun example is its pillowcase/nightshirt pairing with the “Eat Chocolate, Drink Wine, Sleep Naked” saying. Here are three intricate and inspirational-for-decorators designs from Comfy Cozy, owned by Peggy Schafer Vincent.

MAGICAL FAIRY GARDEN: During the day the garden is a fun place to be, filled with flowers, butterflies, ladybugs and dragonflies, but when the lights go out, tiny fairies emerge to sprinkle their magic dust.



TOOTH FAIRY: A sweet gift for any little one who has lost a tooth, this glow-in-the-dark design sparkles with a bright moon, stars and floating teeth. This pillowcase can be ordered as a custom set so parents can record the dates each tooth is placed under the pillow for the tooth fairy.



DINOSAURS: Featuring primary colors to match any little boy's bedroom, this pillowcase is decorated with a prehistoric scene. When the lights go out, the brontosaurus and triceratops morph into fossils and other nocturnal creatures appear.

Comfy Cozy pillowcases and nightshirts are available at www.comfycozy.com.



FASHION INNOVATION

REUSE Jeans

Hot trend alert for summer and fall 2012: colored skinny jeans in hues from robin's egg blue to electric lime green. REUSE Jeans, which creates a line of colored denim jeans, shorts, skirts, jackets and vests made with 80% recycled textiles, has married chic fashion with eco-friendly values.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, in 2006 U.S. consumers alone generated more than 11.8 million tons of textile waste, amounting to 10 pounds per person. REUSE addresses this issue on its website: “In our world of overflowing landfills and global warming, recycling is more relevant than ever. Recycled jeans help counteract the human effect of the disposable fashion industry, while contributing to a cleaner, more sustainable earth.”

Not to be confused with repurposed or reclaimed textiles, these jeans are crafted from recycled textile waste – the scraps and leftovers from production of other garments. Working with factories in China, where there's a vast amount of textile waste, REUSE is helping to clean up the environment one colored pair at a time.

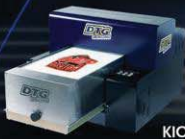


REUSE Jeans (www.REUSEjeans.com) is a line of denim made of 80% recycled textiles. Tip: Colored denim can be embellished with custom embroidery, rhinestones and other mixed-media decorations to personalize it and give it a couture feel.



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LEARN IT LIVE!

Education has long been a hot market for decorated apparel. And if you're not selling to schools, you should be. This ASI Education webinar – "Secrets to Penetrate the Billion-Dollar Education Market" – can teach how to snap up business from schools. In this interactive, self-paced course, you'll learn how to target public, private and online education buyers and how to earn that critical first appointment. Visit ASI's Online Learning Center at ASICentral.com/OnlineLearning to take the class.

HOW TO SELL

Lifestyle Fitness Apparel



The practice pant and jacket are a comfortable set that can be worn by the cheer squad, or by mom as she runs her daily errands. Available from Boxercraft (asi/41325; circle 156 on Free Info Card); (877) 234-4261; www.boxercraft.com.

Though team sport sales continue to hold steady, there's a new market for athletic apparel: It includes health insurance companies, corporate wellness programs, yoga and Pilates studios and gyms, which provide end-users with fashion-forward lifestyle apparel, often equated with retail brands like Lululemon.

"Since yoga and Pilates have become so popular, many end-users have trended toward wearing comfortable and versatile apparel that they can work out in, and then wear for other daily activities and errands," says Ashley Adams, marketing coordinator for S&S Activewear (asi/84358).

Not all lifestyle fitness apparel is imbued with performance qualities like moisture-wicking. For example, tri-blend fabrics may not have traditional athletic wear's performance capabilities, but with their soft hand and trendy appearance, end-users will wear them all day long. "Tri-blend, made of poly/cotton/rayon, is used for both active lifestyle and, in some cases, even sports," says Morey Mayeri, president of Royal Apparel (asi/83731). "The rayon makes the

fabric very soft and drape very well." In addition to being soft and supple, tri-blend has a retro athletic connection. "The three-yarn blend gives it a vintage athletic look, which is what makes it so popular," he says.

And, whether it's a pullover for a wellness program giveaway or a pair of comfy yoga pants for a woman who loves Zumba, decoration type and placement affect how often and where a person will wear the piece. "For tops, we see small decoration near the waist or yoke, and flashier work across the chest and back or on the sleeve, and even on hoods," Adams says. "For bottoms, we see decoration primarily down the leg, across the rear on the waistband or near the cuff."

For decorators who sell lifestyle apparel successfully, the most important thing is to showcase their clients' brands without making the wearers feel like walking billboards. With tri-blends and other more fashion-forward lifestyle apparel, screen printing custom vintage graphics can highlight in a cool way the brand and increase the garment's appeal.

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

Marketplace



Ideal for running, yoga or hanging out, this pullover is a year-round performance piece with moisture-wicking technology for comfort. Available from SanMar (asi/84863; circle 157 on Free Info Card); (800) 346-3369; www.sanmar.com.



This racerback tank is crafted with ultra-soft tri-blend jersey for a vintage look, comfortable fit and silky soft feel. Available from Royal Apparel (asi/83731; circle 158 on Free Info Card); (866) 769-2517; www.royalapparel.net.



This comfortable sports bra features an imprintable bottom band for custom printing or messaging. Available from S&S Activewear (asi/84358; circle 159 on Free Info Card); (800) 523-2155; www.sactivewear.com.

saving 9

Sequins Reduce Stitches



Streamline your stitch count with sequins. “The sequin shapes themselves fill in designs quickly and, depending on the fixing stitch type(s) used, each sequin only has a couple of stitches total to tack down,” says Drew Coufal, owner of OH-based Sew & Sew Embroidery. Therefore, an all-sequin logo may only have 1,000 or 3,000 stitches vs. fully stitched embroidery containing 8,000 or 10,000, depending on the logo size.

Fringe Embroidery

Developed By: Sew & Sew Embroidery

Decoration Details: Fringe presents a twist on traditional embroidery. The technique is seldom seen in promotional apparel, yet has major potential to create eye-catching designs thanks to its dimensionality and visual appeal. Think of applications for pet-store chains, groomers, zoos (simulating fur and whiskers); salons (hair or eyelashes); carpet companies (rug texture); or lawn care (grass). The process requires only minimal effort. Simply pinpoint an area to be fringed, such as the mane on a lion, and digitize the logo so that stitches composing the fringe are one of the last elements sewn (on top of the rest of the stitched logo). Use long jump stitches to make up the fringe, which can be snipped from underneath and pulled through and trimmed from above to create the effect. The fringe stitching should be tacked down, typically with a running stitch at the base of the fringe in an area covered by the final top embroidery.



Fringe embroidery, as displayed here on this lion design, unleashes exciting dimensional possibilities in embroidery. By Sew & Sew Embroidery (circle 172 on Free Info Card).

In Their Own Words: “Fringe gives elevation to the logo and more lifelike reproduction as compared to traditional flat embroidery,” says Drew Coufal, owner.

QUICK TIPS



➔ **Provide a bond so secure that no stitching is necessary.** Press N Bond from Floriani Commercial Products seals the back of the appliqué, embroidery or patch with a clear, highly fusible coating.

➔ **Make the most of bright fashion trends.** The Transfer Extreme line from Transfer Express (*asi/91804*) has been created in full-color simulated process. These plastisol transfers feature vivid colors and a soft hand.



➔ **Use polyneon 60-weight thread** from Madeira USA for small detail and fine text; it allows for lettering as small as 3 mm in height.



5 STEPS: Fashion Tee

Combining techniques leads to a fashion-forward youth garment that teens are truly proud to wear. Michelle Swayze, director of marketing at In Your Face Apparel (IYFA) (*asi/62494*), outlines the custom approach used to create a multidimensional, layered effect:

photos courtesy In Your Face Apparel (*asi/62494*)



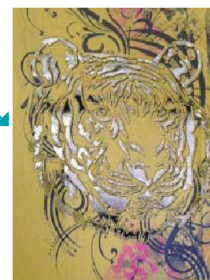
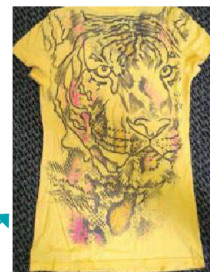
STEP 1: Raw color 30-single 100% cotton fine-knit jersey fabric is bulk dyed to a PMS-match golden yellow prior to being sent to the sew line to ensure the fabric would discharge during Step 3.

STEP 2: An IYFA fashion-fit, girly pattern is used to construct the silhouette produced through the supplier's cut-and-sew line.

STEP 3: A jumbo screen, water-based discharge print is applied to the finished garment. (Discharge printing is the process of removing the color for the imprinted areas of the tee down to its natural state. Then, water-based inks are infused into the discharged areas, integrating them permanently into the fabric.)

STEP 4: Overlay decorating of the tiger mascot is created using a binding fabric and die-cut process. IYFA prints a foil overlay on top of large pieces of fabric. Once the foil is printed onto the fabric, the fabric is adhered to a fabric binding sheet that later will serve as the adhesive to attach to the garment.

STEP 5: The fabric sheets are placed into the machine and laser-etched into a heat-transfer appliqué that's then attached to the garment with a heat press.



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graphic hints



Add interest and texture to apparel designs with Spectra Alloy, a super-shiny, metallic digital cutter material from Imprintables Warehouse (*asi/58475*). It can be used alone or as an accent to add sparkle to any garment. Combine it with other heat-applied graphic materials or screen printing for a multimedia effect.

Decoration Insider
Laser Appliqué



The worn, frayed look of distressed laser appliqué is hot, but what are its limits? Jason Temme, national sales manager at Sportco (*asi/88792*), recommends keeping to text that's larger than three quarters of an inch. Smaller art elements (e.g. a star) could be as small as a half-inch.

Also choose your base garment with an eye toward effect. "If you're going for the distressed look," Temme says, "most of the fabrics used for this technique are cotton or cotton blends, so matching it to a similar fabric type of garment is best."

TONIA KIMBROUGH is a contributing writer to *Stitches*.

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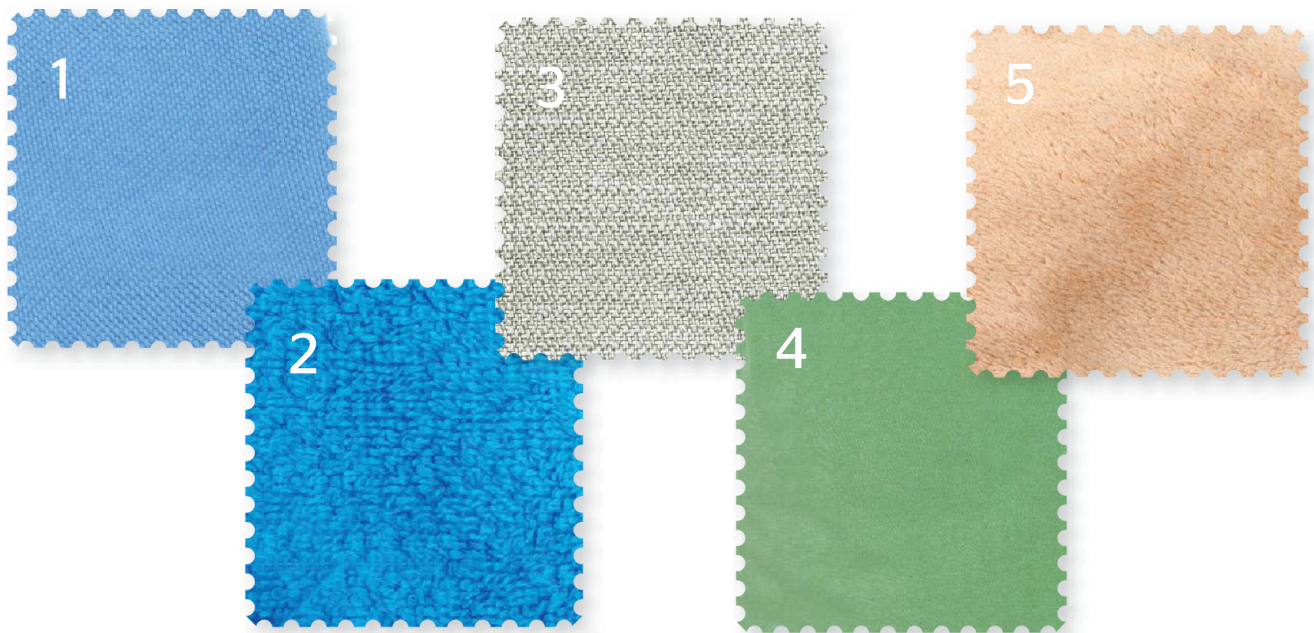
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fabric guide

The Fabulous Five



1. PIQUÉ – a knit-construction fabric created by raised cords often described as waffle-like in texture. Available in a range of fiber contents, e.g. 100% cotton, cotton/polyester blend or 100% performance-enhanced polyesters. Look for a tight construction, a smooth finish and a soft hand.

Benefits: versatile, breathable and durable. Pique can be embroidered with ease, although screen printing works too if you keep the porous nature of the fabric in mind. The finer the pique, the easier it is to print.

2. MICROFIBER – a tightly woven fabric from a very fine poly-thread; these fibers weigh less than 1.0 denier. Though traditionally microfiber garments have been 100% synthetic, there are blended fabrications.

Benefits: a luxurious, sueded finish; colorfastness; and superior draping and easy care. Look for an imprinting solution that

plays well with the lightweight drapeable nature of this fabric and its polyester fiber content. Dye-sublimation is a good option.

3. TWILL – a woven fabric created by alternating an over/under weave of weft yarn through warp yarn, resulting in the distinctive diagonal ridge, sometimes referred to as a “wale.” Twill can be 100% cotton, a cotton/polyester blend, wool, nylon and more. Popular twill variants are denim, gabardine and ticking. Evaluate the quality of twill by examining the diagonal weave. Is it tightly woven? Is the wale raised evenly so that each diagonal rib is the same height?

Benefits: longevity, fewer wrinkles and better stain- and soil-resistance than a plain weave. The heavier weight works well for embroidery or patches, giving a handsome look for uniform programs.

4. JERSEY – a knit made from the consistent inter-looping of yarns, yielding a soft

and stretchy fabric used, for example, in T-shirts. Fiber content varies from 100% cotton to 100% polyester or blends.

Benefits: comfort, strong printing capability and affordability. Jersey provides a smooth surface, making it excellent for screen printing.

5. FLEECE – knit of twisted yarns with a brushed or raised nap on one or both sides. Comes in a variety of finishes, from velour to plush or nubby. Though synthetic fleece (e.g. Polartec) is best-known, fleece can also be completely 100% combed cotton; a blend of polyester/cotton; or made from fibers created out of recycled plastic bottles or bamboo.

Benefits: It doesn't shrink or ravel and provides warmth plus water- and wind-resistance. Issues such as density of pile, ink absorption and stretch can play havoc on a logo if decoration isn't handled properly. Try embossing it for a dimensional look.

punching sense

Perfecting Poor Artwork

By Bonnie Landsberger

Sometimes, your end-customer doesn't have vector or clear photo-ready artwork to give you, and instead submits rough sketches, a letterhead or a business card that usually makes a custom digitizing job an inefficient process. Also, these orders are often marked as rush, so cleaning up the artwork well enough for a vector file isn't possible, which eliminates digitizing with any sort of auto-scanning functions. So, that means as a skilled puncher, you'll have to push auto functions aside and dig into your creative bag of manual tricks.



This image shows a logo submitted to be digitized on a business card.

1 Review the artwork. This gray-scale logo is submitted to me by an embroiderer with a request from the end-customer for me to create color separations for the man's clothes and tools. The end-customer also wants a left-chest size, and that may mean the image is too small for clarity in stitches. Also, there are many elements in the image that are difficult to identify. I note all the questionable areas, and ask the embroiderer to confer with the end-customer before I start punching.

2 Make it easy for your embroiderer to consult with the end-client.

Use the submitted artwork to associate each question you have with a number. That will make it much easier for the embroiderer to be the go-between for you and the end-customer. In this case, I asked that color separations be clarified and that the elements indicated by 1, 2 and 3 be identified. Question 4 requested permission to narrow the width of the leg to what I thought appropriate, and question 5 was a request to confirm that the gray area (water puddle) below the man was to be included in the logo.



This image shows the artwork that was created to accompany questions for the end-customer.

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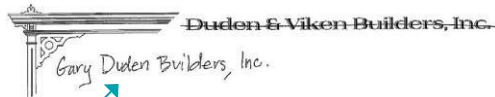


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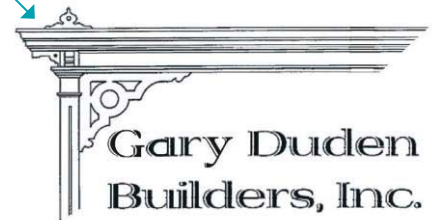


3 Determine what the end-customer wants to see in the finished sew-out. Obviously, the company's name has changed and the new name is handwritten in the space where the lettering is to be set up in two lines. The end-customer has requested that the new name be created in the same font, but it's not a common style available in my digitizing software. Also, the small letters will be best if each letter is manually digitized, but there's little time to hunt down a font to create it first in the artwork. Only the letters G, a and y need to be created, and the customer isn't concerned whether it is an exact match, so I use my best artistic guess.

6 Test sew the design on fabric similar to what will be used in the final sew-out. I am aware that there is probably very little space, if any, between the bean stitch lines and the satin stitch columns, but instead of trying to guess what editing is necessary, a test-sew is the fastest way to decide how much space to add and where, as well as what other areas need attention. This image reveals that some columns are bending, which can either be caused by too much density or not enough underlay for the fabric; some columns could be wider, which will require more space between the column and bean stitch line; and the bean stitch line could benefit from a slightly shorter stitch length for more accuracy, though it can't be much shorter than the current length of 1.5 mm to avoid thread breaks.

Also note that I've failed to attach the column and line at the top of the letter B. If the customer wants to know why I didn't follow the exact style, this would be a perfect example, as it shows how the lettering loses clarity at this small size when all elements of one letter aren't connected. The editing will be done and another test-sew before delivery. If polish doesn't improve the sew-out, the lettering or the entire design may need to be increased in size to allow for necessary modifications.

4 Clean up the artwork and ask the customer for approval before digitizing. The line that crossed through the original letters was eliminated, and the new company name was set up in two new lines. I created the G, a and y by using a similar font and modifying them to be close to the original. The artwork isn't crisp, but the rest of the improvements can be made on the fly while digitizing.

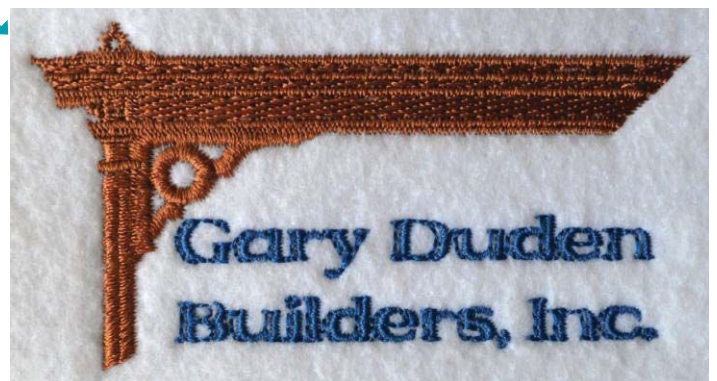


This image shows the artwork after it has been revised well enough for manual digitizing.



This image shows the objects punched over a portion of the scanned artwork.

5 Digitize as close to the artwork as possible without losing sight of your intended results. This takes a little more time for accuracy than it would with clean artwork, but you're also saving by not having to search for a font or clean up the artwork. Because the columns will need to be wider than what's shown on the artwork, they're digitized by "overswinging" each side while using a manual satin stitch. I measure each column after it's punched to assure consistency within each letter. With small letters it can require straying from the artwork, as in this situation I create columns of each letter of about 5 mm to 8 mm wider than the artwork at 1.5 mm to allow for the best sew-out; then, I make adjustments to increase the space between the column and lines of bean stitches.



This image shows the first sewn sample on felt, revealing that polish is needed.

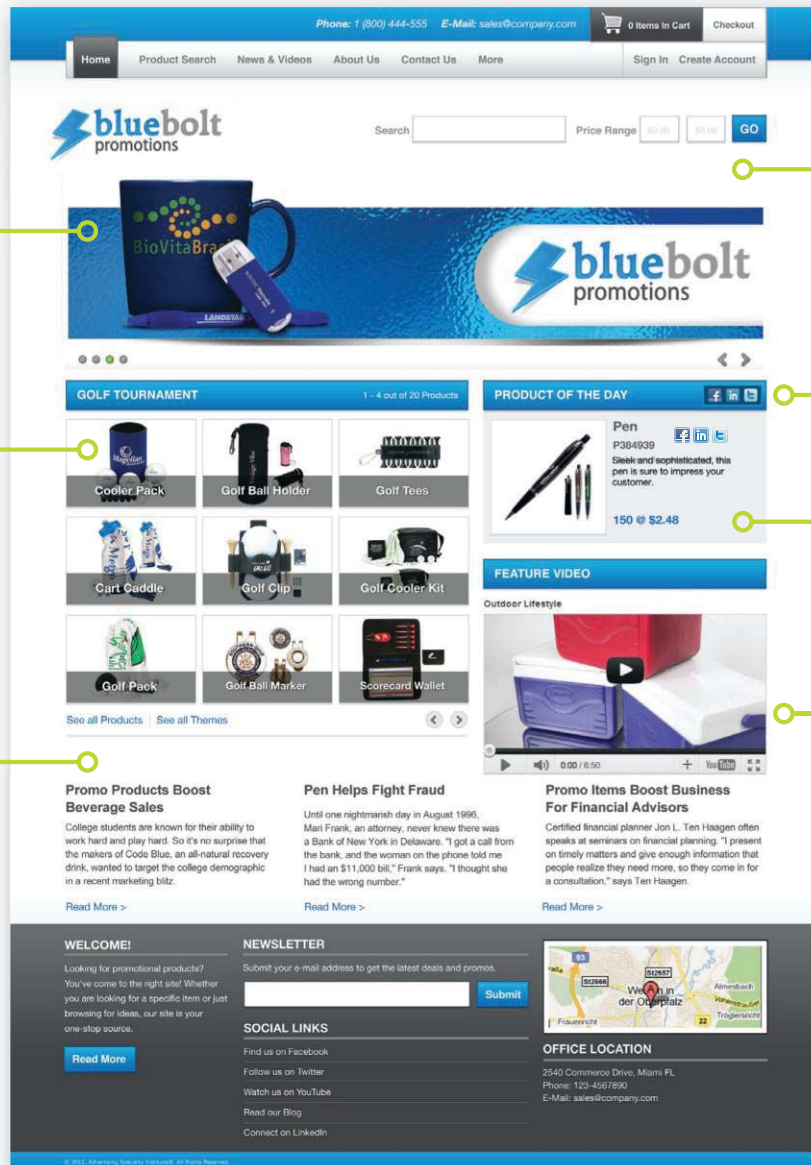
Even when the sew-out is perfect, be prepared for a revision. When you're in a rush, the smallest machine command that can cause extreme problems can slip by. Follow up after the embroiderer has had time to sew the design. Be sure that the customer is satisfied before archiving the master file.

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

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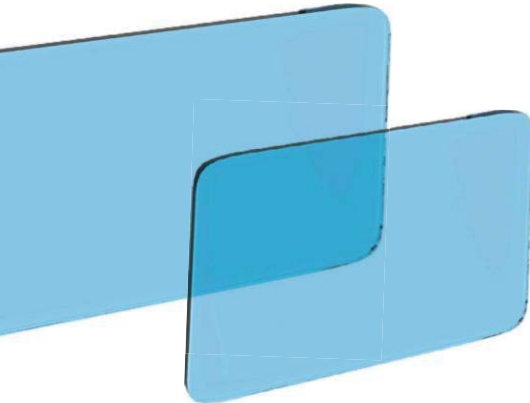
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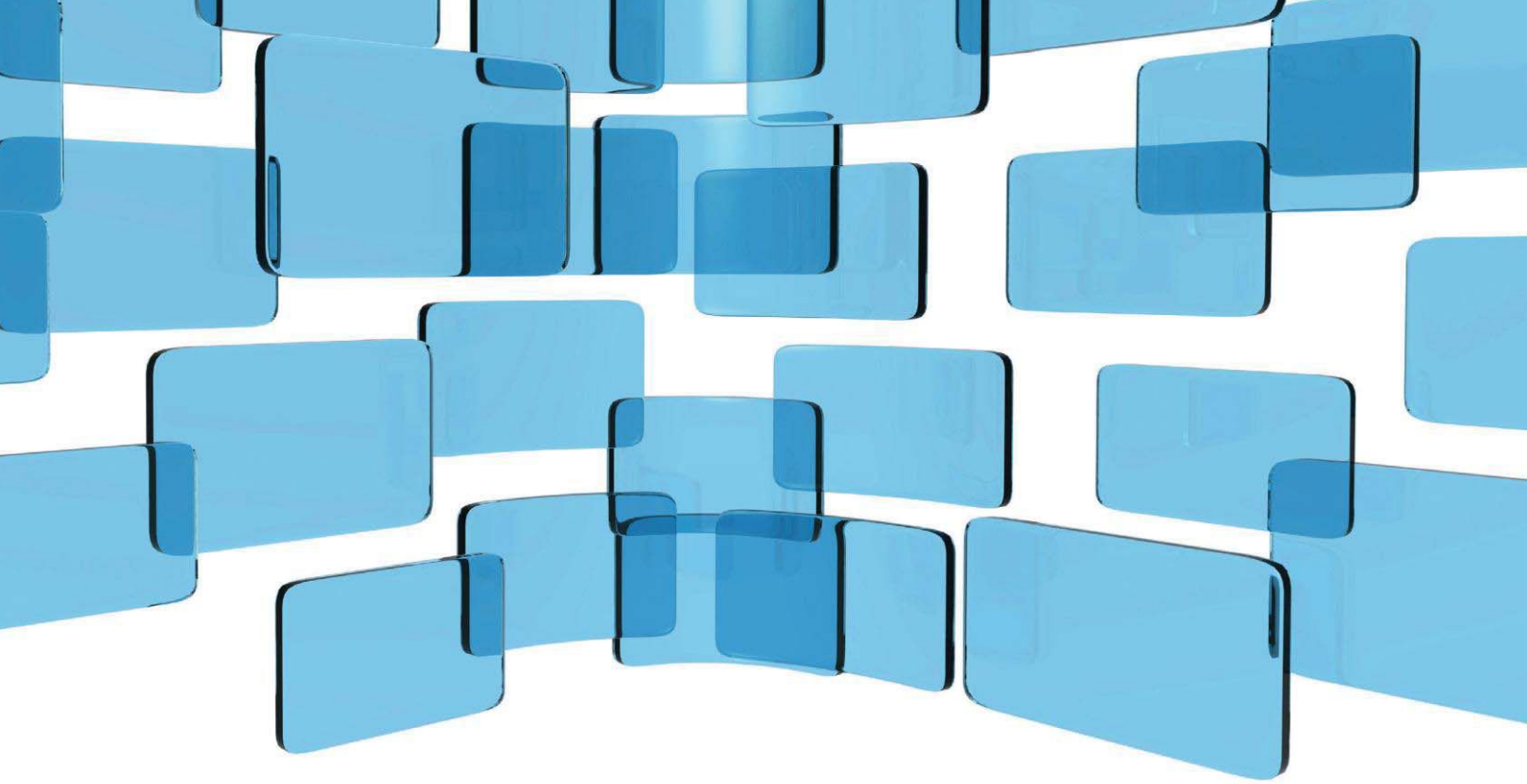
Planning to invest in software or other technology to offer more digitizing/artwork services, organize your orders or just pump up your shop's overall productivity? We break down what you need to know before you buy - with advice from top industry vendors and decorators who've made successful purchases.

By Christopher Ruvo



In this technology-suffused day and age, having the right tools means more than investing in a decent machine and quality thread. It means having software solutions that augment your decorating offerings and help you run your business more efficiently, making you a better resource for customers. As the editors at *Inc.* magazine put it in a recent advice piece: "It's so important to understand how new technologies can help you anticipate customer needs, tailor business processes to best serve customers, and ultimately improve the efficiency of your business - the latter of which can keep costs down."

With that in mind, *Stitches* spoke with shops across the country to find out how they're using teched-up software to better their businesses. Read on for case studies that could help you determine what solution is right for your shop.



BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

With 20 employees, 100 embroidery heads and scores of orders being managed at any given time, things could get out of control quickly at Northwest Embroidery. But for years, the Milton, WA-based shop has kept chaos in check with the help of OnSite, a business management software solution that ShopWorks created for apparel decorators and advertising specialty distributors. With the latest OnSite7 version, Northwest can automatically download vendor pricing, calculate prices based on quantity and stitch count, and coordinate the entire production process, from artwork to job scheduling and tracking. “It allows us to manage everything on one system,” says Operations Manager Erik Mickelson.

One of the things Mickelson likes best about OnSite is that it affords him immediate access to all facets of an order. So, if customers call with questions about their order, rather than putting them on hold or having to call back, Northwest staffers quickly pull up the customers’ information and deliver an answer. Additionally, with the details of inflowing orders clearly laid out within one system, the production manager can schedule jobs with greater organization and efficiency, Mickelson says.

Since artwork can be stored within OnSite, Northwest can speedily and accurately fulfill reorders. OnSite has also made things more efficient for the Northwest sales staff. Reps remotely upload orders, and Northwest uses OnSite’s marketing tab to manage information about leads, which contributes to more focused and organized prospecting. “It helps us make sure we always follow up,” says Mickelson, noting ShopWorks frequently makes upgrades based on customer demand. “We have three or four minor upgrades every year and one major one every six to 18 months,” says ShopWorks President Jay Malanga.

TIP: To eliminate redundancy and save time, consider investing in industry-specific business management software that offers an all-in-one solution, handling everything from sales and marketing management to order processing, production and accounting.

Because every shop is different, it’s important to find a business management solution that meets your specific needs. AzCa Embroidery (*asi/701972*) in Tempe, AZ, found the right fit with Impress by Precise, a total enterprise resourcing planning software made to meet the unique requirements of apparel decorators. After

ART SOFTWARE AT NUMBER ONE

Nearly half (49%) of decorators purchased software in 2011, with graphics art software the most frequently purchased, cited by nearly two-thirds (65%), while digitizing software was purchased by 42% of respondents who invested in software. This chart shows how embroiderers who invested in software have spent their dollars since 2008.

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Graphics/art software	29%	60%	51%	65%
Digitizing software	32%	39%	30%	42%
Industry-specific business management software	9%	17%	11%	18%
Other software	8%	13%	8%	9%

Source: *Stitches* State of the Industry 2012 report

BE A SMART BUYER

A software solution that's right for one shop may not work for another. So, it's important to do your homework. Here are some questions smart buyers should ask - and answer - before investing.

- 1. How will this software improve my business and help me better serve current customers and/or earn new clients?** If you can't settle on a solid answer, put away the checkbook.
- 2. Who else uses this technology?** It's important to talk to other shops that use the software to get a true feel for its benefits and downsides. Vendors should be able to put you in touch with a couple of current customers. Ask for insight from other decorators in online venues like www.t-shirtforums.com and *Stitches'* Facebook page (www.facebook.com/stitchesmag).
- 3. How sharp is the learning curve?** Even very user-friendly software solutions will take getting used to. Are you willing - and do you have the time - to set aside the hours needed to learn the program properly?
- 4. Does the vendor offer quality training and continued support?** If not, it's probably wise to look at other providers.
- 5. Have I done a proper cost-benefit analysis?** That's fancy talk for laying out all the positives of an investment against all the negatives - especially cost. The essence of the analysis lies in accurately quantifying the benefits - like potential increased sales - versus the expense. Done right, the analysis will show whether the investment will behoove your business or just drag down your bottom line.

WHY THEY BUY

Two-thirds (65%) of software that decorators purchased in 2011 was intended to add to what shop owners already owned, very similar to 2010.

	2010	2011
Add to what you already had	66%	65%
Replace what you had	34%	35%

Source: *Stitches* State of the Industry 2012 report

TIP: Digitizing in-house can not only give you more control over design quality, it can also potentially open a new line of business: digitizing for other shops.

months of research, AzCa Owner Nathan Milhoan invested in Impress because he felt it had the "most robust" offerings for embroiderers. When, for example, AzCa creates an embroidery file, the data is automatically pulled into Impress, which then feeds out a stitch count. Through Impress, the stitch quantity integrates with AzCa's pricing schedule, and rapidly relays a price. Impress also automatically updates the color sequence of a design that has been altered. "It's an amazing time-saver," Milhoan says.

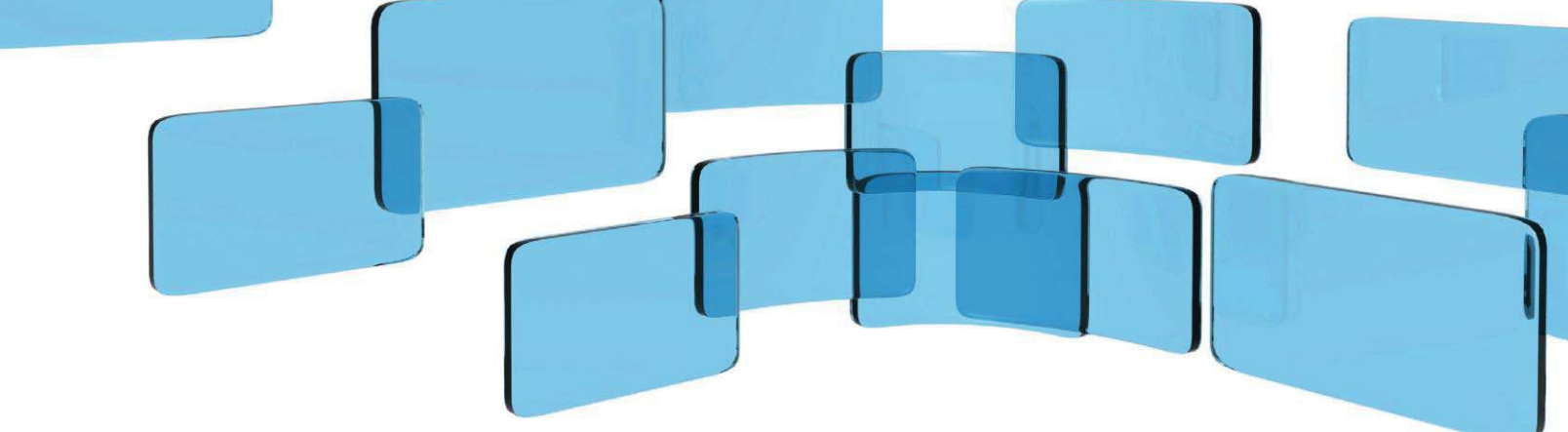
Storing artwork, as well as order and invoicing information, Impress helps AzCa track and recall minute details about jobs, which aids in customer service. As a contract shop, Milhoan takes full advantage of an Impress inventory-tracking feature that alerts AzCa and distributor customers that send the shop apparel if all blank pieces of an order have not arrived. "Let's say we're supposed to get 100 pieces, but we receive 80 - it'll automatically let the customer know where we are in the process," Milhoan says. Shipping is facilitated, too. "You click a button, it links to UPS WorldShip or FedEx, and Impress populates in the necessary information," Milhoan says.

DIGITIZING SOFTWARE

How does making \$150 for a few minutes of work sound to you? Well, Chuck Northcutt has pulled off the feat more than once with the help of Melco's DesignShopV9 digitizing software. Using DesignShop's auto-digitizing feature, the owner of Seattle-based Creative Promotions recently punched a complicated full-back design for a local karate dojo in about five minutes. Working off a .jpeg file provided by the dojo, Northcutt decided what he wanted to sew first and then pointed and clicked through to a completed stitchable file in about five minutes.

Featuring a fist with shooting light rays and Japanese Kanji lettering, the 65,000-stitch logo adorned jackets, sweatshirts and karate training uniforms. Creative Promotions charged \$150 for the logo, and the dojo, digging the design, was happy to pay. "Auto-digitizing requires some thought, but once you get the hang of it, you can work quickly," says Northcutt, who uses DesignShop to help generate a secondary source of income by punching designs for several select shops. "If you're just getting started doing your own digitizing, the software is great because it's very intuitive." He adds that objects maintain color properties so that one can make changes without having to re-colorize. "It's very object-based. When you click on an object, it brings up toolbars appropriate to that object," he says.

Northcutt isn't the only stitcher to have success with the right digitizing software. Shortly after opening Lakeside Embroidery in Smith Mountain Lake, VA, Jack Stevens determined it would benefit his shop if he digitized in-house. He looked around for digitiz-



ing software that would meet his needs, and after conducting some research, he invested in Floriani Total Control. He's still happy about the decision. "It gives me the ability to work with any stitch file someone happens to bring in," he says. "I can edit down to the finest detail."

On a recent job, a small-business owner approached Stevens with a company shirt he needed reproduced in two days. After uploading a scan of the shirt's embroidered logo, Stevens used Total Control to work the design into a stitchable file, matching lettering fonts and manipulating underlay and density to maximum effect. Thanks in part to Total Control's easy-to-use features, Stevens completed the digitizing with efficiency, accuracy and creative flair. And in the end, the customer received four shirts with an attractive logo that he and employees wore for a company photograph.

Hailing Total Control's versatility, Stevens particularly likes that the program allows him to trim at the end of letters and words – and that upgrades are free. Other features that please include a design library gallery that provides quick access to saved designs, the software's compatibility with any make/model embroidery machine, and the fact that the program offers tools for digitizing sequins, chenille and tackle twill. "For me, it's the best package out there," Stevens says.

SPECIALTY SOFTWARE

Investing in specialty decoration software has helped Regina Norwood carve out a niche market. Working with Dalco Athletic's StockStitch 6.1A – a Windows-based program for the automated sewing of stock letters, numbers and appliqué shapes – the owner of Embroidery Plus Concepts cre-

ates tackle twill and DAL-Chenille designs for a client who sells decorated apparel to sororities and fraternities. "No one else around here that I know of is doing this," says Norwood, whose home-based shop is in Pinson, AL. "It gives me an edge."

Offering 40 fonts along with numbers, banners, ribbons, state shapes, sports symbols and other designs, StockStitch aids Norwood in creating evocative embellishments that appeal to frats and sororities looking for decorated shirts, jackets, hats and more. Recently, she completed a customer-pleasing job that included embellishing green and hot pink tackle twill letters on shirts for her client, who was procuring them for the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. "The shirts sold so fast we could barely keep up," Norwood says, noting her client often attends sorority and fraternity events where he sells loads of tackle twill-decorated apparel. "Every time he goes to a show, he sells 200 to 300 shirts."

Calling the software user-friendly and touting Dalco's customer service, Norwood says StockStitch accelerates the time it takes to whip up appliquéd letter designs from stock typefaces and notes that significant customization is possible, thanks in part to the fact that embroiderers can select different sizes of each font, choose multiple stitch types and control stitch width and density. "With all the tackle twill and Dal-Chenille I do, StockStitch has been a big help," Norwood says.

While Embroidery Plus Concepts struck gold with StockStitch, Kathy Scully has found success with another specialty decoration software product. With the help of StoneCut Pro from Digital Art Solutions (*asi/14970*), the owner of West Fargo, ND-based KT Embroidery has tapped into

TIP: Offering specialty decoration like rhinestones and appliqué can open up niche markets and give you a leg up on competitors who don't provide those services.

the rhinestone trend. After investing in the software for producing rhinestone heat-transfers, Scully has earned jobs creating blinged-up designs on apparel for clients that range from sports moms to a dentist's office. Those are all customers she may not have landed if she weren't on the ready with rhinestones. "I definitely think rhinestones are an option you should have," Scully says.

Noting that StoneCut is available bundled with stock rhinestone designs and font collections, Scully says that photographs and CorelDRAW designs can quickly be converted to production-ready rhinestone patterns. "It can be a little overwhelming at first," says Scully of working with StoneCut. "But Digital Art Solutions is really good about helping you get going. And once you have rhinestones, there's more you can do for your customers."

ONLINE TOOLS

Recognizing that customer desire for personalized apparel is increasing, leaders of Visual Promotions felt it would be lucrative to cater to the demand. To do so, the Sealy, Texas-based decorating firm invested in DecoNetwork, a fully-integrated e-commerce solution with an online design tool that empowers customers to personalize apparel on the Web.

Using the DecoNetwork online designer built into Visualpromotions.com, customers of Visual Promotions customize messaging and graphics on an array of clothing items, from T-shirts, hooded

TIP: Shops looking to capitalize on the growing market for small-run personalized apparel and accessories could benefit significantly from online design tools.

sweatshirts and raglan jerseys to tank tops, bibs and infant one-pieces. Since launching the designer several years back, Visual Promotions has seen orders steadily rise. “Everybody likes to put names and pictures on what they wear,” says Jennifer Brandes, vice president of the company. “We like that customers can self-design and self-order online. The turnaround is fast.”

Rather than receive a handful of large orders, Visual Promotions typically gets a variety of smaller-volume orders, with most of the decorating work being done in the digital printing medium. Designs are as unique as the customers who create them. “It ranges from school clubs to kids’ pictures to pictures of grandmothers – weddings, anniversaries and more,” Brandes says.

Containing back-end tools that allow for cloud-based business management, DecoNetwork also enables decorators to establish e-commerce stores for customers. In a matter of hours, Blue Heron Industries of Little Falls, NJ, has built Web stores for clients, whose customers place online orders for decorated apparel that get fed directly to Blue Heron for fulfillment. Kevin Kelly, Blue Heron’s owner, says the stores are popular with nonprofits who want to sell decorated apparel as part of fundraisers. “It’s an on-demand model,” says Kelly, “so there’s no inventory commitment for them.”

Of course, it’s not just customers who use online design tools; decorators take advantage of them as well. Hats Off Lynden, an apparel-decorating shop in Lynden, WA, often utilizes Cadworx Live.com, a Web-based graphics design service free to qualified GroupeStahl customers, to create artwork for its garment graphics cutter. Noting that the program makes it easy for even beginners to work and rework designs, Owner Cheryl Hicks says Cadworx Live helps her shop serve the market for one-off and small-order runs, which may include personalized pieces that wouldn’t be cost-effective for customers to have fulfilled through screen printing.

Doing substantial business with school and youth teams, Hats Off frequently uses CadworxLive to create customized last names and numbers for jerseys. “Some of our screen-printing competitors won’t do the names and numbers, so those customers come to us,” says Hicks, noting that graphics can be exported from CorelDRAW to CadworxLive – and vice versa. She adds: “If you’re new to the business and you want to expand your knowledge of different designs before spending a lot on design software, CadworxLive is a good option.”

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

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ANNUAL SOFTWARE GUIDE

You'll find the newest and newly upgraded business management, digitizing and graphics, monogramming and lettering, and more software - with real user reviews, in this software section.

By Sara Lavenduski, Christopher Ruvo and Nicole Rollender

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

IMPRESS

Precise Software, Jordan, MN; (888) 496-9996, ext. 2; www.precisesoftware.net

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What It Is: Business management ERP software package for screen printers and embroiderers, which offers integrated, real-time access to all areas of day-to-day apparel-decorating operations

FEATURES:

- Quotation module calculates and totals the order price, and then prints a quotation; if the customer approves it, the quote is transferred to order entry
- Purchase order module integrates with inventory and sales orders; PO Builder generates purchase orders directly from sales orders
- Automatically generate invoices directly from sales orders
- Shipping module with UPS/FedEx Integration feeds information to Worldship, receiving back the tracking number and freight costs
- Smart notes can be added to windows and reports to provide extra information about individual sales orders, customers or production issues
- System also handles credit card processing, sales agent commissions, accounts receivable, cash flow forecasts and production planning reports
- Optional modules and reports available, including Order Tracking, Production Scheduling, Multiple Warehouse Support, Web Order Status and XML Web Order Entry, Wireless Inventory Management and Shopping Cart Development

BUYER'S NOTE: According to the vendor, the first three months of technical support and upgrades are included with the purchase of Impress; after that, technical support and upgrades are 15% of the purchase price.

USER REVIEW: Nathan Milhoan, owner of Tempe, AZ-based contract shop AzCa Embroidery (*asi/701972*), invested in Impress because it has the "most robust" offerings for embroiderers. Since his is a contract shop, Milhoan takes advantage of an Impress inventory-tracking feature that alerts AzCa and distributor customers that send the shop apparel if all blank pieces of an order haven't arrived. "If we're supposed to get 100 pieces, but we receive 80, it'll automatically let the customer know where we are in the process," Milhoan says.

PROFITMAKER

ASI Computer Systems (ASICS), Cedar Falls, IA; (800) 544-1274; www.asicomp.com

Cost: Contact vendor for price.

What It Is: Fully integrated, business management software package for managing all front- and back-office functions with a single, flexible application

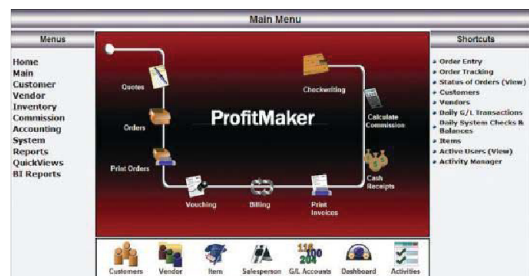
WHAT'S NEW:

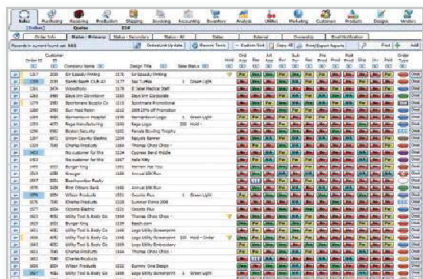
- Integration with ESP Web, a database of more than 800,000 products
- Report scheduler with automated alerts
- Business intelligence reporting, including quick dashboard views for owners and managers
- Quote designer and pro forma invoicing

KEY FEATURES:

- Automated sales processes, including order tracking and integrated shipping, with the ability to order directly from your suppliers
- Complete accounting package, including automated commission calculation
- Prospect and customer management
- Manufacturing, inventory, warehouse and fulfillment capabilities
- E-commerce and shopping cart function

BUYER'S NOTE: ProfitMaker is designed to promote the success of your customer service, sales and marketing teams by allowing them to access vital business information. The system moves information rapidly to those who need it most, to enable you to offer the highest levels of customer service. From finding new customers to thanking them for prompt payment, ProfitMaker helps your front office manage relationships with customers.





ONSITE 7

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

Cost: Contact vendor for price (based on the number of concurrent user licenses).

What It Is: Business management software designed for the promotional products, decorated-apparel and digital printing industry

WHAT'S NEW:

- Online art and document proofing
- Touch-screen interfaces for floor employees
- Point of Sale module
- iPad and other tablet integration

KEY FEATURES: Offers an end-to-end business management solution, including prospect marketing; job quotes; order entry; purchasing and inventory; production scheduling; invoicing and accounting; and management reporting

USER REVIEW: Greg Kitson, president of Decatur, IN-based Mind's Eye Graphics, says his experience as a ShopWorks user since 1999 has been excellent. "The developers were decorators before they got into software," he says. "Our vendor reps always ask the right questions, take the time to listen and answer promptly." Kitson says the production scheduling feature is one of his favorites. "If a customer calls and asks about getting an order by a certain day, I can go through machine by machine and department by department and see how much work is assigned across the board," he says. "Then, I can tell them yes or no right away."

SMARTBOOKS

ASI Computer Systems (ASICS), Cedar Falls, IA; (800) 544-1274; www.asicomp.com

Cost: Contact vendor for price.

What It Is: A single, flexible, powerful software application to manage your entire front-office and back-office functions



WHAT'S NEW:

- ASI SmartSales and ESP integration
- Ability to pay and bill via credit card

KEY FEATURES:

- Order entry, including multi-vendor orders
- Order management and tracking
- Complete accounting package, including automated commission calculation
- Highly customizable and flexible reporting tools

BUYER'S NOTE: Intuitive, user-friendly and easy to learn, SmartBooks is ideal for any business, from startups to established shops, which need quote-to-cash automation, so users can focus on customer needs.

USER REVIEW: "ASI SmartBooks is a complete order-management and accounting software package with everything tied in from start to finish," says Edward Rodriguez, general manager of Miami-based AMSACO (asi/121480). "It's tailor-made for the promotional products and decorated-apparel industry – the vendor understands the features that are important to us."

Rodriguez likes the real-time support, online video tutorials, knowledge database and demo version for test driving it. "It's nice to have everything tied together in one program," he says. "With ASI SmartBooks, you jump from module to module within the same program and access the data or particular module that you need."

SHOP SHREWDLY

Considering buying business management software? Jay Malanga, president of ShopWorks, a technology firm that developed OnSite business management software, says there are definite questions you should ask before purchasing:

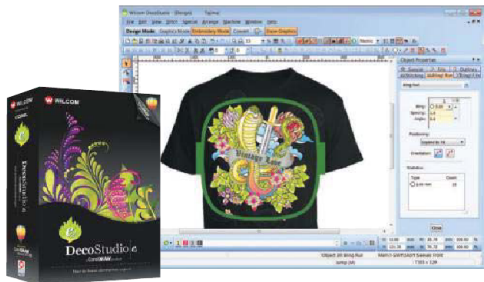
1. Is the system designed specifically for this industry or ported over from another? "The

vendor should be able to show you features that are specific to our industry's needs," Malanga says.

2. What's the company's standing? Get customer reviews. "You want to know how long they've been in business, how many customers they have and if you can get references," Malanga says.

3. Is there a demo available? "Make sure the software you think is going to work for your company *is* going to work for your company," Malanga says. "The only way to do that is to get a demo and play around with it. Demo the system by entering real orders to see how it'll work specifically in situations you encounter every day." – Christopher Ruvo

DIGITIZING & GRAPHICS



DECOSTUDIO E2,

a CorelDRAW product
Wilcom International, Norcross, GA; (877) 657-7500; www.wilcom.com.au

Cost: Contact your Wilcom distributor (prices available for new, trade-in and updates).

What It Is: Design software for embroidery, printing, laser cutting, appliqué, sequins and bling

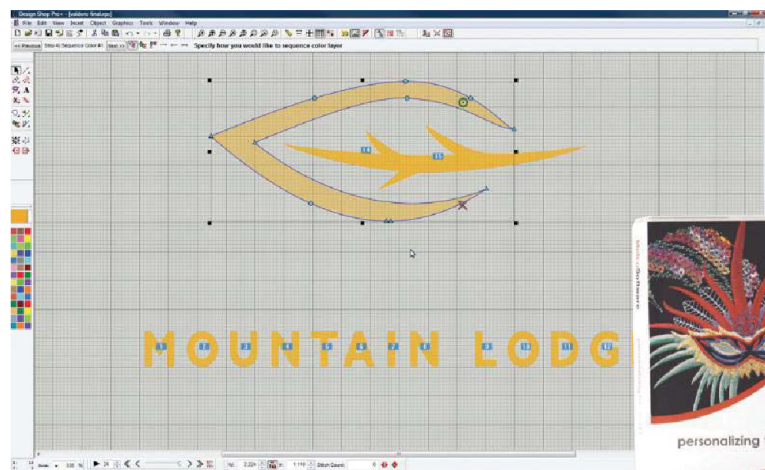
WHAT'S NEW:

- Built-in intelligence removes overlaps, automatically converts vector shapes to bling, and calculates the number of rhinestones required for designs
- Over 50 product templates to visualize design on the garment, with approval PDFs that can be sent to clients
- Auto HoopIt! streamlines production by helping you visualize the design within your chosen embroidery machine hoop (also chooses the most suitable hoop)
- Mouse wheel scroll or zoom option
- Includes Manual and Automatic Knife tool for cutting embroidered shapes into separate pieces

KEY FEATURES:

- Fully-integrated CorelDRAW Graphics Suite X5
- Auto Vector-to-Stitch conversion transfers any vector shape into production-ready, editable embroidery, appliqué or bling designs
- True object-based editing to refine converted embroidery files as needed
- Auto Fabric Assistant automatically applies best-practice embroidery settings for underlay, pull compensation and stitch density based on your fabric

BUYER'S NOTE: All Wilcom software comes with comprehensive support and training.



DESIGNSHOP V9

Melco; Denver; (800) 799-8313; www.melco.com

Cost: Contact vendor for price.

What It Is: Embroidery/digitizing software

WHAT'S NEW:

- LogoExpress links directly into an online digitizing service portal
- Design information can be printed with bar codes
- Users can create fabric profiles that save design information for specific fabrics
- UnaFill Splicer allows splicing in multiple directions of fill stitches for one object
- Vector Graphics to Embroidery Assistant allows instant point-and-click conversion of any vector file to a digitized file

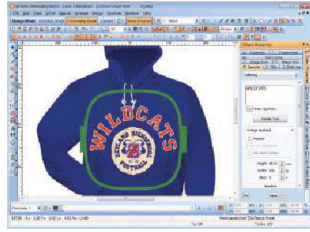
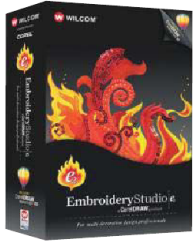
KEY FEATURES:

- Control point editing, expanded stitch editing and automatic borders
- Sophisticated lettering capabilities for all embroidery alphabets and TrueType conversions
- Screen/project view for a pre-embroidery look at the finished product
- Industry-first appliqué feature lets you display appliqué pieces in a fabric on-screen for a realistic view of completed design
- Latest editing tools, plus advanced expanded stitch editing, auto-sequence and auto-lock stitch editing

BUYER'S NOTE: This software is available in four different levels from basic to advanced.

USER REVIEW: Craig Pica, owner of Arvada, CO-based Stitchified, says DesignShop V9 helped him expand his business. "I started out doing guitar straps, and now I have a shop that stays busy doing all kinds of embroidery," he says. "Since I have a Melco machine, the software and machine communicate seamlessly." He appreciates the auto-digitize feature: "If your clients give you vector files, it's a breeze to digitize. If not, you still just have to make a few adjustments."

But Pica says this advanced software may not be appropriate for everyone. "It might be a bit expensive for a home-based user and can be overwhelming because of all the features and complexity," he says.



EMBROIDERYSTUDIO E2,

a CorelDRAW product
Wilcom International, Norcross, GA; (877) 657-7500; www.wilcom.com.au

Cost: Contact your Wilcom distributor.

What It Is: Professional design software for embroidery, print, laser cutting, appliqué, sequins and bling

WHAT'S NEW:

- Built-in intelligence removes overlaps, automatically converts vector shapes to

- bling and calculates number of rhinestones required for a design
- Over 50 product templates included to visualize design on the garment
- Exports each print, embroidery, appliqué or bling to machine format
- HoopIt! lets users visualize design within a chosen embroidery machine hoop
- More user-friendly with additions such as Multiple Line team names and Auto Letter Spacing
- Library of team name layouts

KEY FEATURES:

- High-quality stitch processing technology; ability to fully edit raw stitch files and object-based edit
- 150 pre-digitized fonts for speed, precision and no thread breaks; easily converts TrueType fonts

- Fully integrated CorelDRAW Graphics Suite X5
- Ability to create designs layered with print, embroidery, appliqué, sequins and rhinestones

BUYER'S NOTE: All Wilcom software comes with free support and training.

USER REVIEW: Randy Fulk, owner of Country Homemade in Pine Hill, NC, says this software has been a true asset at his monogram-heavy business. "The ability to adjust and manipulate text instantly makes EmbroideryStudio the best embroidery software for my business," he says. "You have access at your fingertips to instantly make adjustments."

Fulk also likes that users can create their own ESA fonts. "This feature has kept our customers returning," he explains, "because if they get an item monogrammed with a font I designed and want something else with the same font, they return to us."



EOS (EMBROIDERY OPERATING SYSTEM)

Compucon USA, Stokesdale, NC; (336) 294-0604; www.compuconusa.com

Cost: \$695 to \$5,000

What It Is: Professional lettering, editing and digitizing software suite for simple design preview and transfer from computer to embroidery machine for lettering/editing and digitizing

WHAT'S NEW:

- Conversion of stitch designs for fuller editing capability and appliqué lettering
- Font profiles for speed, consistent quality, repeatability or use by inexperienced staff
- Plug-ins for CorelDRAW and Adobe Illustrator

KEY FEATURE: Professional control parameters and assignment of colors to needles

BUYER'S NOTE: This software is suitable for all machine table pantograph sizes. It contains all major machine sew formats and features unlimited one-on-one online live training for current versions. Additionally, font profiles are useful to retailers who have staff turnover.

USER REVIEW: Pete Papastrat, owner of Binghamton, NY-based APPCO Screen Printing, says this software helped his screen-printing business move into embroidery to meet customer demand. "I don't think I'd still be doing embroidery if it weren't for this software," he says. "It's really enhanced my business over the last 10 or 12 years."

He says the shortcuts Compucon added to the more recent versions are a real plus. "One of them is the ability to go into an already established, multicolor design and pull it apart to make changes without redoing the whole thing."

Papastrat notes that there can be a sharp learning curve for the EOS software. "I had experience with design and graphics in CorelDRAW and Adobe Photoshop, so that helped me," he says.



FLORIANI TOTAL CONTROL

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

Cost: Contact vendor for price.

What It Is: Complete digitizing and embroidery software solution that include digitizing, editing and lettering tools. Includes tools for quick digitizing and full control of tackle twill, appliqué, sequin, chenille, cross-stitch and Appli-Stitch designs.

WHAT'S NEW:

- Appli-Stitch tool allows you to create Appli-Stitch designs
- Color-blending feature offers control over each color layer
- Font Tip feature allows users to see each character included with each font, along with recommended size range from the properties box
- Enhanced properties box replaces folder names with icons for navigating work space
- Users can open, create, edit and save quilting designs in .qcc, .cqp, .hqf, .ssd and .txt formats

KEY FEATURES:

- Ability to save designs as images that can be sent to customers
- Editing capabilities that include the ability to fully edit .dst sew files; users can edit density, stitch length, object size and shape, stitch angles, start and end points, underlay and more
- Save2Sew feature modifies designs for 60 fabric types
- Embedded design library gallery provides a quick view of saved designs, with the ability to drag and drop files directly onto work page
- Works with all embroidery machines; designed to work on a PC, but can be used on a Mac that can run Windows programs
- Over 140 keyboard fonts

BUYER'S NOTE: Simple to learn and use according to the manufacturer, Floriani Total Control has all the tools required for both novice and master digitizers.



FORTÉ EMBROIDERY SUITE

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

Cost: From \$1,495 to \$5,495. Contact vendor for pricing considerations involving trade-in and complete embroidery system packages

What It Is: Consists of three levels; Forté LE comes with full-featured lettering and editing functions; Forté ID adds digitizing functions to create embroidery designs from 17 image and embroidery file types; and Forté PD features advanced functions to expand a digitizer's creativity

WHAT'S NEW:

- All levels compatible with Windows Vista and Windows 7 (32 and 64 bit)

- Software comes with workbook and CD featuring lettering, editing and digitizing exercises; user manual interface within software

KEY FEATURES:

- 250 digitized keyboard fonts feature monogramming, run stitch lettering as small as 3 mm
- Integrated customer database to manage client information, including detailed job and design information
- Slow-draw feature helps ensure proper pathing and corrects errors pre-sewing
- Real-view feature displays the design in any of 114 pre-programmed fabric types; users can customize by scanning the customer's fabric; allows for color adjustment and saves the view to e-mail or print
- Design information window allows for editing of design elements: change color or stitch type; order, select, hide or ghost objects; and apply trims and lock stitches by clicking the check box for each object

BUYER'S NOTE: This software is ideal for both small and large companies that want an affordable, feature-rich package.



STITCH & SEW SUITE

Compucon USA, Stokesdale, NC; (336) 294-0604; www.compuconusa.com

Cost: \$135 to \$1,495

What It Is: Software that can be used for simple design preview and transfer from computer to embroidery machine or lettering/editing and digitizing designs

WHAT'S NEW:

- Time- and work-saving NameDrop feature, Auto Outlines and sequin digitizing
- Plug-ins for CorelDRAW and Adobe Illustrator

KEY FEATURES: Very easy to use, this package contains all digitizing methods and produces professional stitch quality.

BUYER'S NOTE: This software is suitable for all machine table pantograph sizes and contains all major machine sew formats. Vendor offers unlimited one-on-one online live training for current versions.

USER REVIEW: Mike Cleaves, embroidery manager at Tampa-based RJ Advertising, dba B&B Sports Sales, says Compucon has been a loyal partner since he invested in Stitch & Sew. "Whenever I have a question or concern, they've been extremely helpful," he says. Cleaves does a lot of typesetting, manipulating and changing. "We do school uniforms, so there are lots of names and name drops," he says. "I've had no issues with Stitch & Sew, and it's the easiest to learn and use that I've experienced."

SMART DESIGNER X4.5

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

Cost: \$699

What It Is: Software tool that transforms CorelDRAW X4 or X5 from a generalized design application to an industry-specific graphics system in order to simplify and automate the graphic design process

WHAT'S NEW: More than 140 new features have been added using Corel Corp.'s new seamless docker technology.

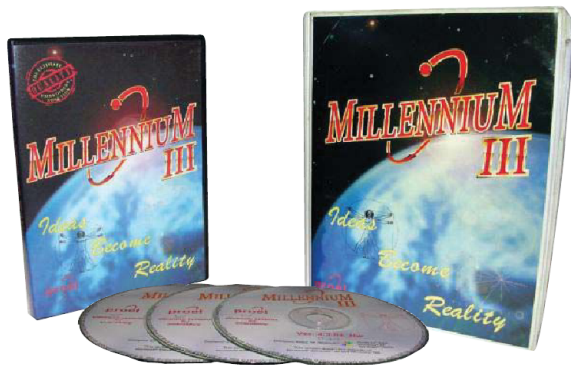
KEY FEATURES:

- Automates and simplifies more than 100 complex design and production tasks
- Automatically creates virtual samples from a library of stock product templates in vector and high-resolution photo formats
- Interactively edits stock design templates to create custom graphics quickly

USER REVIEW: "Ongoing support from Digital Art Solutions has been very good," says Charles Russell, owner of ByDesign Advertising, located north of San Francisco. "DAS' customer support is efficient and effective. They prefer that you e-mail them with your question or concern; that way they have the answer when they call you."

As for a learning curve, Russell says it correlates to experience with CorelDRAW. "If you don't know CorelDRAW, there's definitely a learning curve," Russell says, "but it's not as significant if you have graphics experience." Russell loves that when images are imported, he can edit aspects and the design changes instantly.





PROEL MILLENNIUM III

Bito USA, Oceanside, NY; (866) 248-6872; www.bitousa.com; www.embroidery-machine-software.com

Cost: Contact vendor for price.

What It Is: Comprehensive embroidery and digitizing software with laser-cutting capabilities. Users can purchase the features they need, with the option to add advanced tools later. Basic functions include lettering, editing, basic digitizing, advanced digitizing and automatic digitizing.

WHAT'S NEW:

- Motifs On A Curve, which allows you to repeat motifs along any curve and to create unique borders, such as flowers, dots and triangles
- Motif In An Area tool for filling a closed geometric figure with one or two motifs of the same or different colors
- Shortenings tool, which automatically adjusts stitch densities

KEY FEATURES:

- Software employs a direct connection from your computer to any brand embroidery machine; it can connect with any machine that has a serial interface and USB interface
- Includes the capability to combine embroidery with laser cutting through Auto Laser Lettering feature

BUYER'S NOTE: Users can choose from seven levels: Lettering, Basic Editing, Intermediate Editing, Advanced Editing, Digitizing Standard (Basic), Digitizing Professional and Advanced Digitizing. Note: Lettering comes in two entry levels and a full level; first level includes 25 auto fonts; full level has 54 fonts, plus the ability to produce lettering from TrueType fonts. Advanced Editing includes full editing, specialty stitches and the ability to manipulate sequins, double sequins and chenille stitches. Digitizing Professional is for intermediate/advanced digitizers and includes a powerful lettering system and stitch editor that allows you to modify designs even if they've been created in other systems and/or in different work file formats.



STITCHPORT TECHNOLOGY

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

Cost: Contact distributor for price. In the U.S., contact Hirsch International at www.hirschinternational.com or Ed Levy at ed@hic.us.

What It Is: Software system for automatically generating embroidery, digital print designs and lettering

WHAT'S NEW:

- WebAPI for integrating embroidery technology in a Web browser
- XML interface for standardizing connectivity with order processing systems and websites
- Cloud-based tech support

KEY FEATURES:

- Embroidery and monogramming generating engine produces designs based on an order that can be created by a customer website or order-entry system automatically
- Barcode technology built into Tajima embroidery machines allows machine operators to retrieve orders without additional hardware

- Auto-color assignment with barcode technology enhances order accuracy, decreases downtime due to the loading and programming of design data, and reduces training costs for new machine operators
- System consists of three separate services: Order Processor, Design Generator and Dispatcher; administration website allows configuration, administration and management of order exceptions
- Automated design creation; automatic needle setting for embroidery; and automatic RIP for printing
- Hands-free, automated flow from order through to machine; Rules Engine applies your business rules and recipes

DIGITIZING SOFTWARE MUST-HAVES

Before investing in digitizing software, check that it has these important features:

1. Strong Editing Capabilities: The first thing you should look at when considering digitizing software is its editing capabilities, says D.J. Anderson, a manager at RNK Distributing, which distributes Floriani and Jenny Haskins product lines. "You need to have complete edit-

ing control, and that means stitch length, stitch densities and shapes of objects," he says. "You have to be able to edit on native and stitch files, especially .dst."

2. Stitch Type Versatility: Proper digitizing software should enable you to create and fully modify satin, run and fill stitches, Anderson says, adding: "You need the ability to change

all the properties, such as stitch length, stitch density, compensation and underlay, and also the start and end commands, trims and stops."

3. Quality Lettering Features: Anderson advises to look for software with a "good keyboard lettering tool with the ability to tweak, adjust and manipulate in any way that you need to do to work with the logo." - CR

PE-DESIGN NEXT

Brother International Corp., Bridgewater, NJ; (800) 4-A-BROTHER;
www.brothersews.com

Cost: Contact vendor for price.

What It Is: Full-feature digitizing and editing software for experienced hobbyists and home-based businesses that comes with built-in features and functions, including the ability to link multiple Brother embroidery machines

WHAT'S NEW:

- PhotoStitch feature to convert photos to digitized design files; also, a stitch simulator
- 100 built-in fonts (60 more than the previous version, PE-DESIGN 8.0); 200 lettering and design templates
- Font outline feature adds dimension to select lettering styles
- Candlewicking and stem stitches, and a spiral floral pattern feature that transforms basic shapes into unique creations

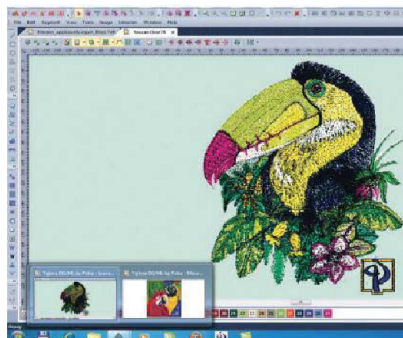
KEY FEATURES:

- Advanced user-friendly graphical interface
- Digitize designs manually or use the stitch wizard for PhotoStitch, Auto-Punch and Cross Stitch functions
- Name Drop function to create different names with the same design and layout
- Link Function allows you to connect up to four Brother PR1000 Series or upgraded PR650 Series multi-needle machines to a single computer
- Create patterns using mirror copies of your selected design or arrange a selected pattern in a circle

BUYER'S NOTE: Brother embroidery machine owners can manage the work of four machines through one interface. This feature really shines when an embroiderer needs each machine to stitch out different designs at different speeds simultaneously.

USER REVIEW: Cindy Haps, owner of Warren, MI-based Embroidery Perhaps, says PE-Design Next helps her efficiently embroider and digitize designs, like the creations she often comes up with for her daughter's Polish dance group. "I love the realistic view, which allows me to view my digitizing and edit it at the same time," Haps says.

Noting that the stitch simulator helps her edit designs quickly, Haps says the name-drop feature is helping her expand into monogramming and personalization of items for groups such as schools, clubs, teams and thank-you gifts.



TAJIMA DG/ML VERSION 14

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

Cost: Contact Hirsch International for cost at www.hirschinternational.com.

What It Is: Embroidery software with advanced lettering effects, special stitch effects and sophisticated embroidery creation from vector files

WHAT'S NEW:

- User interface for a customizable work environment, Quotation Estimator and Multiple Core Support
- Design wizard allows you to save your favorite garment and embroidery settings
- Variable density in satins and fills and extended stitches at corners and ends
- 38 fonts and Automatic Text borders
- Appliqué backgrounds for a realistic preview and Spiral Fill to fill spaces creatively with limited stitches

KEY FEATURES: QuickName Express allows automated personalization directly to your machine

BUYER'S NOTE: This software will feel familiar to CorelDRAW and Adobe product users. It's also Windows 7 optimized and includes enhancements like Direct 2D Graphic Support. The software works well with Windows XP and Vista.

USER REVIEW: Since this software is available at various levels, potential buyers can invest in the level most suitable to their needs. "The higher up the level, the more options and features there are, which means there is more to learn," says Beverly Field, president of Canada-based Artistic Embroidery Digitizing. "Someone with CorelDRAW or Adobe Illustrator experience would be very comfortable with it because there are similarities with Pulse." Field likes that Pulse continues to improve the software to stay up to speed with evolving operating systems: "Every time Windows changes, Pulse comes up with a way to maximize the new platform and include more built-in features that save time."

Field's favorite function is the Global View. "This new feature shows the complete design on the side so I can see where I am in the design," she says. "Like most features, I can turn it on or off depending on whether I need it."

WINGS' XP EMBROIDERY SOFTWARE

MESA Distributors Inc., Fort Worth, TX; (800) 456-3727; www.WingsXPsoftware.com

Cost: From \$795 to \$4,995. Discounts available for trade-ins or when purchasing an embroidery machine package.

What It Is: Consists of four modular levels - Pilot, Operator, Puncher and Pro - allowing you to easily upgrade the software level for only the difference in price. The Pilot level offers lettering, editing and basic digitizing tools; Operator and Puncher levels each include more features and tools than previous levels; and Pro level gives a user complete control over every aspect of digitizing and editing.

WHAT'S NEW:

- All levels compatible with Windows Vista and Windows 7 (32 and 64 bit)
- New user interface and 3-D work space
- Add new objects as clones, available in Operator level and up
- Embroidery machine simulation (slow redraw) in all levels
- More photo-stitch options added
- Chenille stitch included in Pro level

KEY FEATURES:

- Direct communication with most graphic design software programs using OLE
- Users can customize the work area; hot-keys for fast access to the most-used functions
- Pre-digitized fonts included, with the ability to edit these fonts



MONOGRAMMING & LETTERING



BES MONOGRAMMING SUITE SOFTWARE

Brother International Corp., Bridgewater, NJ; (800) 4-A-BROTHER; www.brothersews.com

Cost: Contact vendor for price.

What It Is: Monogram customization software

WHAT'S NEW:

- Monogram Designer Wizard and a realistic 3-D preview for virtual thread and fabric viewing
- Compatible with most embroidery machines, with ability to save designs in embroidery file formats

KEY FEATURES:

- User-friendly, intuitive interface allows users to customize design tools on their work space and easily edit designs
- Over 60 built-in fonts, 120 appliqué border and frame patterns and 137 decorative designs
- Advanced grid capabilities for accurate design placement

BUYER'S NOTE: This software is appropriate for beginner to intermediate users, and those new to embroidery software who want to add a personal, creative touch to their embroidered designs.

USER REVIEW: "As a vendor, Brother is great," says Cathy Cattle, owner and digitizer at Seward, NE-based Sew-B-It Custom Embroidery. "I've developed a wonderful relationship with them. I went to an embroidery conference 10 years ago that they sponsored, and the reps took time out of class to show me things. In my opinion, Brother has the best sales and service, and the software fits my business like a glove."



STOCKSTITCH 6.1A

Dalco Athletic, Dallas; (972) 494-1455; www.dalcoathletic.com

Cost: Contact vendor for price.

What It Is: Windows-based, stand-alone software designed for automated sewing of stock letters, numbers and appliqué shapes; doesn't require any editing or merging

WHAT'S NEW: Windows 7 compatible

KEY FEATURES:

- More than 40 fonts and banners, ribbons, states and more
- Can be used with any of the most popular materials offered by Dalco, including twill and designer fabrics, such as polka dots, pebble grain and Dal-Chenille
- Ability to select multiple sizes of each font and multiple stitch types (bean, satin and zigzag) and to control stitch width and density

BUYER'S NOTE: This software is specifically designed for appliqué, so it's ideal for shops that design award jackets, spiritwear, team uniforms and fashion appliqué. Users don't have to cut any type of lettering, since all of the component parts are pre-cut to fit the Stock Stitch pre-digitized program.

SPECIALTY DECORATION

HOT FIX ERA

Sierra Technology Group, St. Petersburg, FL; (888) 764-6664; www.d-era.com

Cost: Contact vendor for price.

What It Is: Specialty software for creating hot-fix designs, including rhinestones, rhinestuds, nailheads and sequins

KEY FEATURES:

- Vectorizer built into program; automatically converts raster or vector art to hot-fix designs
- Convert any True Type font into hot fix, or use any of the pre-digitized fonts
- Fully integrated with Stitch Era Liberty multimedia designs
- Compatible with Roland cutters; HPGL output
- Compatible with CAMS, Libero, DECOR, Salli and AAS rhinestone machines
- Compatible with AAS, DECOS, Libero, Salli, SWF and YAS sequin machines
- Doesn't require CorelDRAW or Adobe Illustrator

TWILLSTITCH PRO PLUS

Imprintables Warehouse (*asi/58475*), Masontown, PA; (800) 347-0068; www.imprintables.com

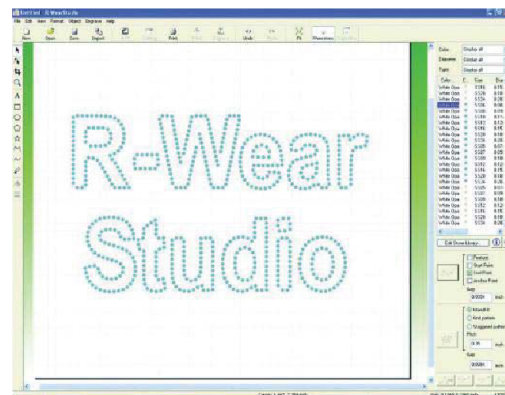
Cost: \$499

What It Is: A comprehensive, simple-to-use software program for creating fast appliqué sew files from vector art; compatible with Adobe Illustrator, HPGL Plotter Files, Windows Metafiles and other programs

KEY FEATURES:

- Extensive FontPLUS! Library that includes 150 new, pre-digitized and resizable direct embroidery lettering fonts
- Ability to import existing embroidery files into your designs and preview the finished product on-screen pre-production
- Complete control over design elements with easy-to-use editing tools
- 39 different Motif stitch types and 40 tackle twill shapes

BUYER'S NOTE: There's a downloadable trial version available.



R-WEAR STUDIO

Imprintables Warehouse (*asi/58475*), Masontown, PA; (800) 347-0068; www.imprintables.com

Cost: \$499

What It Is: Software program for creating designs for heat-applied lettering, logos, graphics and templates for hot-fix rhinestones using a vinyl cutter or engraving machine. Users can also create a rhinestone template with the GX-24 with new Sticky-Flock material; an engraver isn't required.

WHAT'S NEW: Sticky-Flock is new to Imprintables Warehouse and works with R-Wear Studio to create custom rhinestone templates.

KEY FEATURES:

- Designs and photos can be used to create custom graphics
- Import files in .bmp, .jpg, .gif, .png, and .ai or .eps for Adobe Illustrator 7 and 8
- Generate stroke fonts for customized inscriptions, such as initials, names and messages
- Pick from a digital library with 500 styles of Swarovski rhinestones
- Automatically calculate profits and control rhinestone inventories

BLING BENEFITS

Rhinestone-setting software can benefit your shop in four ways:

- 1. Serve A Growing Market:** At Digital Art Solutions (*asi/14970*), rhinestone-related sales have doubled every year since 2008, highlighting how end-user appetite for rhinestone embellishment is intensifying. "The market is there and growing," says Craig Mertens, president of DAS. By investing in the firm's StoneCut Pro Rhinestone Multi-Decoration software or another quality rhinestone software package, embroiderers can tap into the rhinestone revenue stream.
- 2. Low Entry Cost/Speedy ROI:** If you have a vinyl cutter or laser engraver, you already have what you need to start producing rhinestone transfers with software like StoneCut Pro. "You don't have to invest in a lot of equipment, so your cost of entry is low," Mertens

says. Once you have the software, you can quickly start producing professional rhinestone designs. "You can get a fast return on your investment," he says.

- 3. High Margins:** "Rhinestones can really augment your margins," Mertens says. "They have a high perceived value, and people are willing to pay more for that."
- 4. Create Mixed-Media Designs:** Quality rhinestone-setting software can facilitate the creation of multimedia designs, which enable you to offer a greater range of creative embellishment options. With StoneCut Pro, for example, you can produce apparel graphics that combine rhinestones and other decoration types, such as direct-to-garment prints and screen-printed designs. — CR

STONECUT PRO RHINESTONE MULTI-DECORATION SOFTWARE

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

Cost: \$295

What It Is: Windows-based software program, compatible with 2000 XP Vista and Windows 7, designed for automated sewing (no editing or merging) of stock letters, numbers and appliqué shapes

KEY FEATURES:

- More than 40 fonts and banners, ribbons, states and more
- Can be used with most materials offered by Dalco, including twill and designer fabrics
- Ability to select multiple sizes of each font and multiple stitch types
- Controls stitch width and density

BUYER'S NOTE: This software is great for shops that design award jackets, spirit wear, team uniforms and fashion appliqué. It allows users who have digitizing or editing software to add embroidery drop-ins to the appliqué they create in StockStitch, but doesn't require digitizing software. It also can accelerate appliqué lettering.

USER REVIEW: Kathy Scully, owner and operator of West Fargo, ND-based KT Embroidery, says training for the StoneCut Pro rhinestone software is never far away. "DAS includes a CD with the software and offers live weekly webinars," she says. "You can call the support desk or ask questions live in the webinar. They're constantly adding new font packs, artwork and upgrades."

What's more, the software has enabled Scully to create interesting new designs. "I can combine embroidery with rhinestone accents, as well as window decals and rhinestone shirts," she says. "You can also use the vector artwork when making signs and banners; it comes together as a complete package for your customer."



ONLINE TOOLS

CADWORXLIVE.COM

GroupeSTAHL, St. Clair Shores, MI; (586) 772-6161; www.cadworxlive.com

Cost: Membership is free to all qualified GroupeSTAHL Sales Alliance customers.

What It Is: Web-based design service for creating graphics intended to be used with a vinyl cutter; boasts a robust set of tools and a short learning curve

KEY FEATURES:

- Outputs to a variety of production methods, including CAD-CUT, digital-print heat transfers, digital print and cut and screen printing
- Creates files for appliqué when used in conjunction with Twill-Stitch Pro or Ioline 301 software
- Membership includes hundreds of templates, thousands of pieces of Clip Art and VectorCut and an exclusive cut driver





DECONETWORK

DecoNetwork Pty. Ltd., Whittier, CA; (855) 332-6638; www.deconetwork.com

Cost: The vendor offers flexible pricing plans: DecoHub starts at \$99. DecoStores provides an unlimited number of websites at \$149. A 1.85% transaction fee applies to Internet orders only, excluding Business Hub. Get complete rates at www.deconetwork.com.

What It Is: Web-based product that provides an online store to sell printed or embroidered goods, plus an online

designer that allows your customers to self-serve and design their own products. Includes an integrated quote, order and invoice management system called Business Hub, and a retail touch-screen kiosk that brings personalization to the retail space.

WHAT'S NEW:

- CorelDRAW-powered online designer providing rich CorelDRAW graphics for production; dynamic CorelDRAW templates can be customized by your customer
- Team name and numbers to build team uniforms
- Business Hub™ quote, order and invoice management system, including professional quote and order templates, plus online approval and payment methods
- Automatic order download is a small desktop application that automatically downloads orders from your DecoNetwork website to your desktop, providing easy access and a local backup in case of Internet outage

KEY FEATURES:

- Complete website for your customers to browse and view your product catalogs, designs and company information; allows your customers to self-serve and create their own custom products
- Backend order-management system to manage your online orders and download print or embroidery-ready artwork print production worksheets
- Ability to generate newsletters, promotional codes or discounts to encourage sales
- Unlimited number of Web stores, which are powerful selling tools for schools, charities and sports clubs

LIVEDESIGNER FUSION 2012

Melco, Denver; (800) 799-8313; www.melco.com or www.livedesigner.com

Cost: LiveDesigner is offered in an annual flat subscription fee and can also be tailored for some clients by transaction fee-based setup.

What It Is: Customers can add personalization to existing e-commerce sites with LiveDesigner Fusion and output files directly to their production floor or fulfillment partners.

WHAT'S NEW: Simple API integration into a variety of shopping carts; support is included.

FEATURES:

- Generate graphics for embroidery and print lettering elements, with more than 100 embroidery and TrueType fonts included; supports

advanced lettering features like enveloping and perspective

- Generate graphics for vector (.ai, .eps, .svg) and embroidery designs (.ofm, .exp, .dst); upload unlimited designs
- Generate graphics for design templates, for which you can modify color, text and alphabet
- Create fulfillment file(s) for lettering (.png and .eps file formats for print; .ofm, .exp and .dst file format for embroidery and designs)
- Batch convert design files from any supported format (e.g., for print can convert .svg to .eps, or .eps to .png; for embroidery can convert .ofm, .dst or .exp to/from each other)
- Get design info, such as number of colors, stitch count and dimensions
- Play stitches in a Flash stitch player for any embroidery file; also works with dynamically created lettering/templates

DO YOU NEED AN ONLINE DESIGN TOOL?

Online designers allow your clients to customize the graphics and text they want on an apparel piece right on your website, and then order the decorated product from you. Solutions vary. LiveDesigner Fusion from Melco, for example, is an online designer that gets built into your existing e-commerce platform. DecoNetwork, meanwhile, is its own fully-integrated e-commerce system that can include an online designer. Here are a few questions to ask to determine if an online designer is right for your business.

- 1. Are you experiencing growing demand for personalized apparel or small-volume orders of custom-decorated apparel?** If so, having an online designer can help you cater to this demand, allowing customers to personalize items, while even potentially streamlining the order process.
- 2. Do you want to ramp up online business?** If yes, an online designer can help. If you market effectively and word gets out about your personalization platform, your e-commerce orders could increase.
- 3. Are you willing to make the commitment?**

Even if you're somewhat tech-savvy and benefit from great vendor support, operating and managing a website with customization tools and e-commerce capabilities can prove challenging. Be ready to dedicate yourself to learning the system - and to the time-consuming and possibly costly task of marketing your new service to customers. - CR



Model: Erin, Major
Model Management

The Body Art

and Stitch Connection

A small, but growing, number of small-business owners offer tattooing and apparel decoration under one roof. We go inside their shops and explore the relationship between skin and apparel art.

By Christopher Ruvo

Jane @ Party (DR-0029) print dress from Rogue Shirts (www.rogueshirts.com; circle 160 on Free Info Card). Rogue Shirts Apparel, founded in 2005 with offices in Thailand, Australia and the UK, provides a niche in the market for designer clothing that's urban-inspired and features the work of tattoo artists, along with other graphic- and tattoo-inspired designs.

niche market

Frankie Orange's talent with a tattoo needle earned him a bevy of celebrity clients and opened the door to an unexpected second career working on rock-n-roll tours. But after years on the road, tattooing and working as everything from tour manager to personal assistant for headlining acts like Metallica and N'Sync, Orange promised his young daughter, Sixx, that he would spend more time at home. True to his word, the devoted dad launched a tattoo shop in his hometown of Annapolis. But shortly into the successful venture, disaster struck: Orange was diagnosed with essential tremors – a condition that triggers random, involuntary twitching. His tattooing days were over.

While he employed top-notch skin artists who carried on his high-end inking work, Orange couldn't confine himself to just a managerial role. Knowing he'd "go nuts" without an outlet for hands-on expression, the lifelong artist decided to add a screen-printing operation to his tattoo shop. "Screen printing made sense," Orange says. "Through all the years working with bands, I did a lot of merchandise designs for artists like Michelle Branch and Justin Timberlake, so I knew screen printing was something I could do."

Boy, was he right. Now, Orange Tattoo Co.'s screen-printing arm – Orange Screen Printing – is a thriving business that serves an array of clients, from celebrities like Tim McGraw to a local nine-year-old girls' basketball team. While the back story behind Orange's foray into screen printing is unique, his tattoo shop is part of a small but growing number of skin-inkers venturing into apparel decoration.

With the notion that tattooing and apparel decorating are complementary from an artistic standpoint and a practical business perspective, a smattering of shops across the country enable customers to get their shirts – and skin – embellished in one place. "It's two types of businesses that go well together," Orange says.

Read on to learn more about these



Frankie Orange was already a famous tattoo artist when he launched Orange Screen Printing to complement his Annapolis-based tattoo shop. Accomplished at creating unique, contemporary designs in both mediums, Orange styled the print on the shirt he's wearing for Pathfinders for Autism, a support organization founded by parents whose children have autism. "This design really has a special spot with me because it symbolizes a great cause," he says.

successful shops, and how tattooing and apparel decoration inform each other as artistic processes.

CUSTOMER CORRELATIVE

Alexander Kennedy initially invested in embroidery and screen-printing equipment so he could create shirts and hats embellished with his Endless Ink Tattoo Shop logo. But one day, Kennedy says, a man who came into the Denver-based business for some skin art noticed staffers "messing around" with screen-printing equipment. The client, who ran a trucking company, asked Kennedy if his crew could print shirts for his business. Kennedy took the job, and in doing so, a whole second

line of business was born. "It's something that happens now," Kennedy says. "We have people come in for a tattoo, find out we also do screen printing and embroidery, and end up ordering shirts to promote their business, venture or event. The businesses are definitely complementary in that way."

Echoing the sentiments of other apparel-decorating tattooers, Kennedy says the potential to generate additional revenue and more fully meet clients' artwork needs – be they for skin or fabric – are key reasons why he decided to start printing and stitching commercially.

While it occasionally happens that an apparel-decorating client decides to get a tattoo, more often than not it's the tat-

too side of the business funneling sales to the decorating wing. For example, Orange regularly tattoos an Annapolis police officer who serves on the city's SWAT team. Because of that connection, Orange landed an order decorating hooded sweatshirts for the SWAT team. Since the hoodies were official pieces that would be worn in the field, it was essential that Orange produce all details – especially the colors and dimensions of the printed chest badge – exactly right. "It was a cool job," Orange says. "It felt like helping on a top-secret mission."

Back at Endless Ink, a sale of approximately 5,000 screen-printed shirts was rooted in a tattooing job. After a local young man passed away, members of his basketball team went to Endless Ink for tattoos commemorating their lost friend.

The team then decided to order memorial T-shirts for the boy's funeral. Once the teammates started wearing the shirts at school, other students wanted them too. Endless Ink met the demand. "There's a lot of opportunity when you can offer clients more in terms of their top-quality art needs," says Kennedy, adding that an attorney, after being tattooed, commissioned Endless Ink to redesign his business' logo and print 122 shirts for a golf tournament with which he was involved.

Nonetheless, don't get the idea that the apparel-decorating divisions of shops like Endless Ink are dependent on the tattooing operation for customers. Often, clients with no connection to tattooing seek screen printing and other services. Todd Johnson, owner of Everett, WA-based Buzz 'n Bones Tattoo & Piercing, says most of his

shop's screen-printing clients didn't first have their skin inked by him. These teams and small businesses represent a revenue stream Johnson would never have dipped into without the decorating service. "Tattooing is the main thing we do, but screen printing gives us more clients," Johnson says. "It's a good thing for us to have."

COMPLEMENTARY MEDIUMS

A graphics artist by day, Nichole Wicks spends considerable time analyzing a gamut of fonts and working the right lettering styles into cutting-edge screen-print designs for clients of her employer, Missouri-based Neosho Graphics. In a fortunate stroke of concomitance, Wicks' familiarity with fonts helps her at her nights-and-weekend gig as a tattooer at

DESIGNS FOR SKIN AND APPAREL

Rogue Shirts' Lead

Designer and manager Kevian Liley leads a team of fashion designers and tattoo artists who work to create fashion-forward designs that are printed and/or embroidered onto trendy T-shirts, polos, wovens, dresses, hoodies, jackets and more for adults and children. Recently, Liley's longtime friend, Simon Wilson, who also works as a portrait artist/graphic designer (www.swankyporraits.com), was appointed to head the Rogue UK design team. Initially,

Wilson focused on creating logos, graphic design jobs and websites, and then expanded his work to apparel decorating. Here are some of Rogue Apparel's newest releases.



This ladies' MF China Girl hoodie (MF-J-008) is all-over printed, including on the hood. Available from Rogue Shirts (www.rogueshirts.com; circle 160 on Free Info Card).

This men's Rogue woven shirt (Rogue England in Black) features Tattoo Urban Graffiti embroidery and print. Available from Rogue Shirts (www.rogueshirts.com; circle 160 on Free Info Card).

This men's Rogue T-shirt features an all-over, soft Buddha print. Available from Rogue Shirts (www.rogueshirts.com; circle 160 on Free Info Card).

Ozark Ink Tattoo Emporium. “I see a ton of fonts that not everyone sees, so when someone comes in looking for a distinctive lettering style, I can give them something different – something that will really be what they want,” says Wicks, who grew up working in her family’s silk-screening shop before earning an art degree and apprenticing as a tattooer.

As Wicks indicates, tattooing and apparel decorating – especially screen printing – don’t just pair well as businesses; they are complementary as artistic mediums, too. Sure, there are differences: Skin and fabrics are certainly dissimilar canvases, and in tattooing you tend to work from dark to light, whereas screen printing is light to dark. But nonetheless, there are correlative skills – tricks of each trade that inform the other.

Accustomed to hand-drawing many tattoo designs, Wicks occasionally calls on her pencil-and-ink abilities to craft out-of-the-box screen-print graphics. Drawing can allow for greater creativity and more subtle detail than may come from developing designs on a computer alone, she says, adding: “I don’t have to depend strictly on the computer. I can begin by drawing something out and have some-



“We have people who come in for a tattoo, find out we also do screen printing and embroidery, and end up ordering shirts.”

Alexander Kennedy, Endless Ink Tattoo Shop

thing unique.”

Still, Wicks is no neo-Luddite. The computer-based design skills she has honed producing graphics for screen printing facilitate her tattooing. She may start with a hand-drawing of a tattoo, but if a client desires changes, she sometimes scans the drawing into the computer where she can speedily make – and demonstrate to customers – options for altering the design. “It makes it a lot easier,” she says.

For Johnson and others, tattooing and apparel decorating are similar in that creating a successful design starts with thoroughly understanding a client’s needs. “You have to get all the information about what they want and put it together,” he says. From there, Orange says, you use your expertise to turn an idea or basic artwork into a piece that’s attractive as a tattoo or apparel embellishment. “You have to make it right for the medium – you have to make it tattooable or printable,” he says.

“And, you have to do it in a way that works economically for your customers.”

Of course, the connection between tattooing and embellishing isn’t just behind the scenes. In recent years, tattooing has informed apparel decoration in a way that’s plain for customers to see: Tattoo designs are now popular as prints on everything from T-shirts and hoodies to caps and shoes. For an example, look no further than Ed Hardy, a line of clothing based on tattoos by California skin-inker Don Ed Hardy. Popular as streetwear and with celebrities – including musicians, motocross riders and mixed-martial arts athletes – the internationally successful line has stores everywhere from New York and San Francisco to Delhi and Dubai.

Ed Hardy isn’t the only one capitalizing on the tattoo apparel craze. Working closely with tattoo artists, Rogue Shirts creates a clothing line embellished with tat-styled designs. The company’s popular offerings include woven shirts with embroidery and print graphics done in a “tattoo urban graffiti” style. Believing demand will grow, Rogue executives are considering a by-request model in which consumers could send in tattoo images that Rogue would then decorate on apparel using embroidery and printing, says Lead Designer and Manager Kevian Liley. “The growing trend around the world is that tattoos have become more of a fashion symbol than a mark of a criminal,” Liley says. “The tattoo designs we now see on clothing are unique and utilize the modern printing and embroidery techniques that have improved over the last 10 years.” ■

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

PARTNER WITH TATTOO SHOPS

These days, tattoos have become mainstream. People from all walks of life get their skin inked. And many of these people need decorated apparel. As such, your business could benefit from partnering with a tattoo parlor. Not only can the shop refer customers who need embellishment work to you, but it can also be a good client, as many tattooers want logoed shirts and caps they can sell to end-users. Potential clients you could gain from a tattoo shop include:

1. Local businesses, law firms and corporate accounts: In talking to tattoo artists across the country, *Stitches* learned that shops that double as decorators have gained apparel-embellishment work from a diverse range of clients who initially came in for tattoos. Such clients include everyone from mom-and-pop shops and nonprofits to law firms, corporations and even government accounts. If you partner with a tattoo shop that doesn’t decorate clothing and accessories in-house, you could be the one getting this business.

2. Bands: It’s no secret that musicians dig tattoos. Bands also have a constant need for branded merchandise, particularly T-shirts, hooded sweatshirts and even hats.

3. Motorcycle Clubs: No, we’re not talking about the Hells Angels here. Like tattoos, motorcycle riding has gone mainstream, and there are riding clubs all over that want full-back embroidered designs of their emblems on vests and jackets. Many who ride also sport a tattoo or two.

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Coming Next Issue

What's coming up in August *Stitches*

By Nicole Rollender



Saving the Garment Center

■ For years, a group of apparel designers and decorators have worked to save the famed NYC garment center. We take an in-depth look at their efforts and the surprising ways they're keeping apparel manufacturing/decoration right here at home.

Top Sales, Networking & Decoration Tips

■ Wondering how the industry's best salespeople, networkers and decorators achieved their insane level of success? We talk to the best of the best and share their secrets with you.

Businesses In The Black

■ Small, startup decorators often don't handle their financial planning like pros. But don't worry – we've got top budgeting dos and don'ts from the experts.

And much, much more!

needle watch

Needle Patrol

Our friend Slick (an embroidery machine needle) has hidden himself somewhere in this issue. He might be in an editorial photo, graphic or text – he's not in an advertisement. If you find the needle, send us a note that says, "I found the July needle on page XX," along with your name, company, address and phone number (or 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., Trevese, PA 19053; fax: (215) 953-3107. Also, tell us a little about your business. No phone calls please; you must respond in writing. Hurry! Responses for the July needle are due by July 31. 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 September/October issue.

Slick Is Cover-Worthy

In the May issue, Slick hid in the "25 Years of Covers" section on page 68 between the January 2010 and February 2010 covers. **Ruth Massey** of Vineland, NJ-based **The Embroidery Den** was chosen at random from a grand total of 25 responses. As this issue's winner, Ruth will receive Madeira USA's gift certificate. Keep your eyes peeled for the industry's favorite game of hide and seek!



By Ed Levy



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.

Q I have a 5-year-old, one-head embroidery machine. Due to some effective marketing on my part, my business is starting to take off. However, I really haven't looked into new single- or multi-head machines since I purchased mine new. What are some new features and attachments I should be aware of, and how should I decide (in general) what type(s) of new machines to invest in?

A As far as a new machine is concerned, you'll find that less is more. Machines today are faster, quieter and more power-efficient and have larger sewing fields. Many customers replace older 12-head machines with eight-head machines and get better productivity. Advancements in color-change mechanisms, movement speed, trimmer speed and stitches per minute have important time off each run.

A significant factor when considering adding equipment is looking at all of the added expenses. Adequate space will be required for any machine. Additional electrical requirements might be necessary, and more labor to run production is a strong possibility. While these are important factors to consider, having a strong client base and a need to expand can easily justify the expenses.

A lockrose attachment is a special device that places Swarovski crystals onto a garment.

In addition to expanding with another embroidery machine, consider adding attachments to your existing machine or diversifying into other processes. In today's economy, diversification is king. There have been a number of enhancements to machines over the past five years that make it easy to diversify.

Several attachments are available for embroidery machines that turn ordinary embroidery designs into extraordinary creations. Let's take a look at a few examples.

1. Sequins: A sequin attachment enables the ability to add single-color or multicolor sequins in a variety of sizes directly on the garment being embroidered. Sequin attachments easily work with a variety of embroidery machines; however, most are machine-specific. Some digitizing software programs have the option to create sequin segments without having to manually place each one. Some machines can accept a single sequin, while others can accept multiple attachments.

2. Laser: A laser attachment provides the ability to cut material of all types as part of the production process. This gives the ability to do traditional appliqué, reversed appliqué and the ever-popular distressed appliqué. One advantage of an integrated laser is that you no longer need to order cut material or rely on a cutter. The combination of precision and process enables the embroiderer to use scrap material and turn it into a revenue-generating item. This process opens the door for much more creativity with appliqué.

3. Lockrose: A lockrose attachment is a special device that places Swarovski crystals onto a garment as part of the embroidery process to add bling to a garment. Rhinestones have been a huge hit in the marketplace, and they're usually heat-applied. With the lockrose attachment, crystals are sewn into the garment for permanent results.

Additionally, look for other enhancements such as LAN connections to link the embroidery machine to a network and barcode capabilities and automatic color assignment to streamline loading designs to the machine.

Now, let's look at two other affordable imprinting options.

Direct-to-garment printers offer a cost-effective way to produce small runs of designs, regardless of the number of colors. This is a great market to tap into. Additionally, combining direct-to-garment printing with embroidery creates a whole new opportunity for multimedia.

A **stand-alone or bridge laser** adds many of the same capabilities as a laser attachment. However, it also adds the ability to do laser-etching. With laser-etching, only a small portion of the material is cut (burned) by the laser, resulting in the image being etched into the garment.

Whether you're deciding to add new equipment or add options to existing equipment, make sure that any purchases not only help support current and future needs, but also provide the ability to diversify into other embellishment processes.

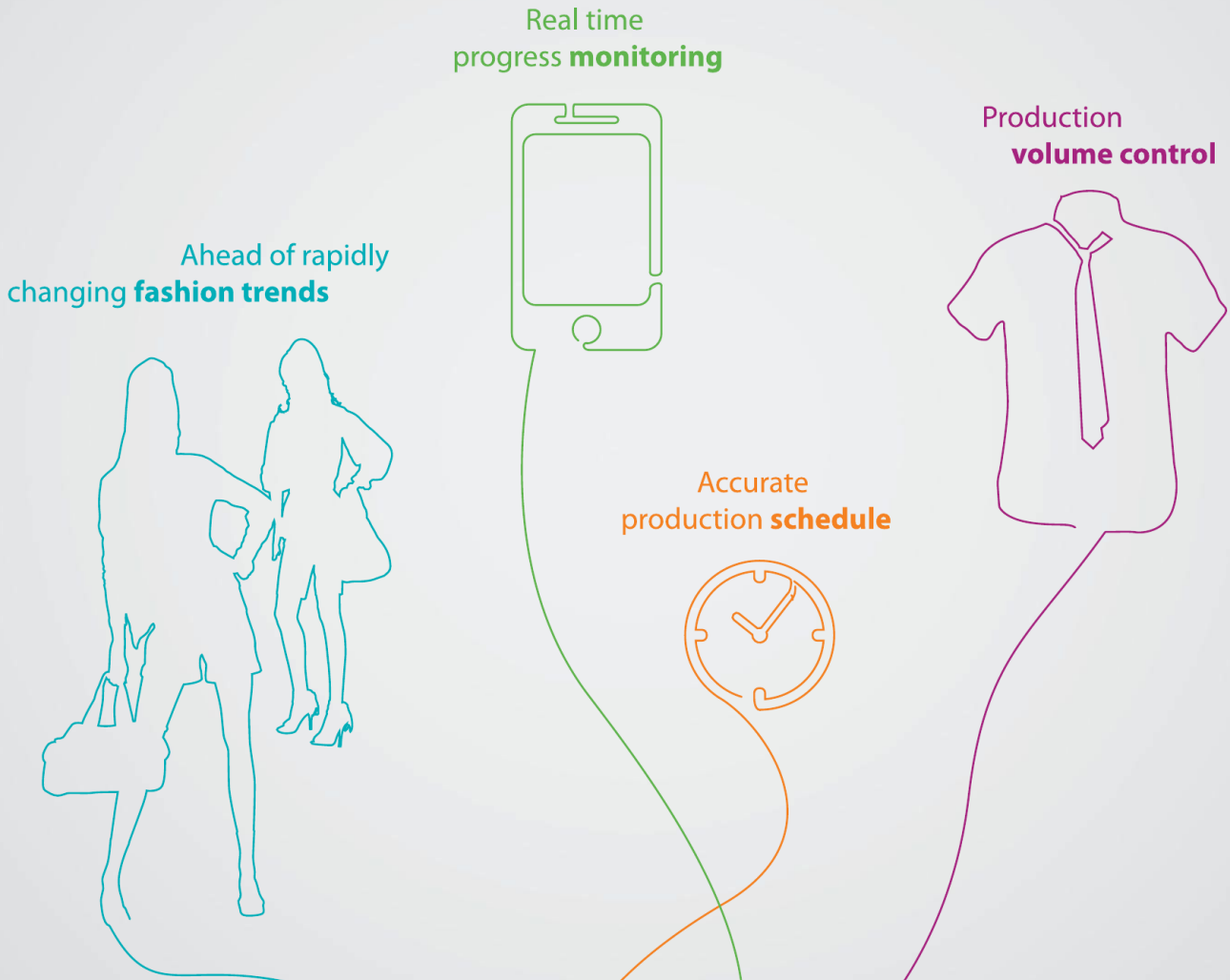
ED LEVY is director of software products at Hirsch International and owner of Digitize4u, an embroidery and digitizing operation in Montoursville, PA. A 22-year industry veteran, Levy has owned screen-printing, embroidery and digitizing businesses. In 2001, Levy began consulting and founded EmbForum, a professional Tajima DG/ML by Pulse software users group. Contact: ed@hic.com or ed@digitize4u.com.

Looking Forward

In the next issue, you'll learn how to overcome the most common sales objections decorated-apparel providers hear. See you next issue!

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