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November 2014



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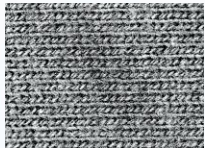


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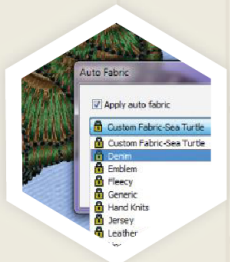
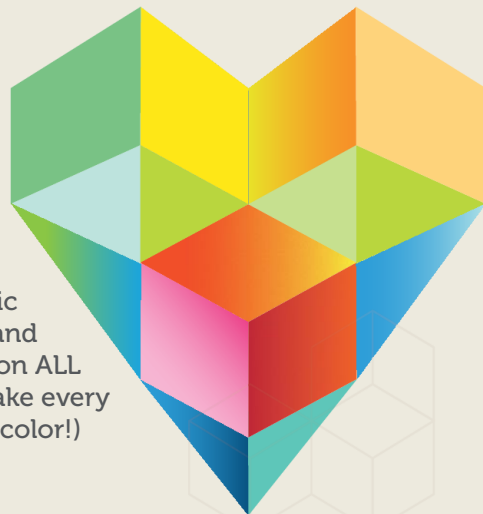


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FEATURES

Cover Story 44 2014 Big Decorating Challenge

The winning decorating teams used their creativity and business smarts to create a unified, functional apparel solution for a fictional, but demanding, client.

Sourcing 54 Mending the Apparel Trade

It's been a year and a half since a factory collapse in Bangladesh killed 1,129 people, most of them in the garment industry. Some in the industry believe this preventable tragedy was the wakeup call needed to usher in an era of ethical sourcing, but they say there's still a lot of work to be done in Bangladesh – and the rest of the world.



INTERACT

Stitches.com 18

Trending topics: How decorators get revved up for fourth-quarter sales; how shops handle their digitizing needs; and how to achieve goals by setting clear milestones and tracking progress.

Pinterest.com/stitchesmag 19

What's hot from our Screen-Printing and Embroidery Boards.

Letters 20

Readers talk about just starting their businesses, celebrating their 25th anniversary and their favorite embroidery designs.

Expert Weigh-In 22

Erich Campbell of Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415) and Geri Finio of Studio 187 weigh in on how to create a top-notch decorated-apparel program for your clients.

Phil Stitch Answers 24

Phil finds cheerleading shorts, sarongs for resort guests and chocolate brown long sleeve tees.

NEWS

Industry 27

ASI sent its Promocar on the road this summer; GROUPEStahl appoints a new CEO; Proforma Distributors acquire Hyde Brothers Printing Co.; and more.

World 28

Trending topics: 99-year-old Lillian Weber plans to sew 1,000 dresses for African girls in need by the time she turns 100; Australian artist Catherine Tipping uses stitches instead of pixels in her embroidery series, "Filter"; and more.

Strategy 30

Howard Potter of A&P Master Images (asi/702505) moves to a bigger shop and opines on the importance of cleanliness and organization as a factor in a company's success.

About the Cover

Design: Hillary Glen

Photography: Mark Prickslett

Design created, digitized and embroidered by TeamWorld Corporate Programs (asi/342534), Binghamton, NY

DECORATING SOLUTIONS

5 Steps 33

Learn how to use neon thread to make a stock design pop.

Decorating & Fabric Trends 34

Hot topics: Penn Emblem Co. (asi/77120) offers PennTrans Transfers that are digitally printed in high-definition, vibrant colors for sports markets; Transfer Express (asi/91804) offers a free webinar on cashing in on the education market; and more.

Saving 9 36

Quick tips: The Wild Side offers a new collection of soccer rhinestone transfers for any soccer fanatic; Floriani Commercial Products offers Precision-Angle Tweezers for precise thread/stabilizer picking; and Imprintables Warehouse (asi/58475) offers Cad-Color Solutions Opaque for white and dark garments.

Machine & Software Upgrades 37

Hot topics: Hirsch International (asi/14982) offers PulseID, automation and personalization software for even the smallest embroidery firm.

LOOK BOOK

Apparel Trends 38

Neon, the color cognac and digitally printed designs.

Showcase 41

Latest sports apparel to decorate and sell.

Niche 42

The merriest holiday designed apparel and accessories.

Coming Next Issue 61

What to look forward to in December 2014 *Stitches*.

Ask an Expert 64

An expert talks about the elements of a strong decorating business website.



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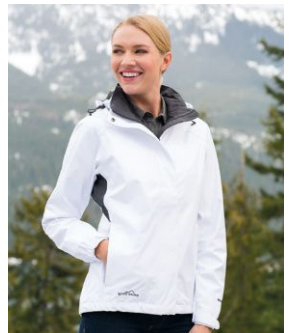
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22

In this month's "Expert Weigh-In" section of our "Interact" department, **GERI FINIO**, owner of Anne Arundel County, MD-based Studio 187, talks about how to handle client requests for logos from scratch or to rework an existing one. "I'd suggest sizing and placement be taken into consideration," she says. "For example, if a logo consists of initials followed by 'Professional Corporation,' it would be very important to balance the two elements. The initials (or logo) shouldn't overpower the text or be too small to read."

In this month's "Editorial," *Stitches* Editorial Advisory Board members weigh in on whether a decorator should be able to offer logo design and creative services. The consensus was "yes," because there are so many ways for decorators to subcontract. **JOANNA GRANT**, vice president of Graphic Production and Support Services for Affinity Express (asi/33149), says this model works successfully "only if the decorator gets complete information from the client. A statement like, 'My customer doesn't know what they want, but it needs to be cool,' isn't uncommon. The answers enable my team to execute the designs more effectively."



17



64

In this issue's "Ask an Expert," **ERICH CAMPBELL**, digitizer and e-commerce manager at Albuquerque, NM-based Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415), offers advice on how to create the best website possible to help you grow your business. If you're not ready to add e-commerce, one good way to encourage sales via your site is with a catalog. "The most basic sales tool, beyond the obligatory contact information and info-request forms, is your online catalog," he writes. "Whether self-developed or an embedded version provided by your garment vendor, a searchable catalog is paramount for anyone expecting to conduct sales online."

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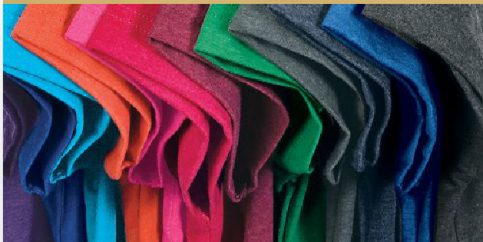




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Big Decorating Challenge



The results are in for *Stitches'* inaugural Big Decorating Challenge, where we asked embroidery shops to flex their creative muscles and create a decorated-apparel solution for a fictional nursery and landscaping company (turn to page 44). Part of the challenge was to design an original logo, which is hard for many smaller shops.

I asked our Editorial Advisory Board to weigh in on whether decorators should be able to revise or create clients' logos – and whether it's a time-drainer or added revenue. The consensus is decorators should offer this type of service, even if subcontracted out. Here's what they had to say:

Jane Swanzy, Swan Marketing LLC: "Decorators risk losing clients and revenue by turning away business. There are many sources to provide clients with everything they need. Graphics aren't my strong suit, but I contract with artists for amazing work."

Joanna Grant, Affinity Express: "As a resource for outsourced creative services, this model works successfully only if the decorator gets complete information from the client. A statement like, 'My customer doesn't know what they want, but it needs to be cool,'

isn't uncommon. The answers help my team execute the logos."

Deborah Jones, MyEmbroideryMentor: "Decorators can use online vector art providers that create concept art for under \$100, and these firms can also turn artwork into digitized design files."

Erich Campbell, Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415): "When it comes to original work, partnering with a known graphic designer or service provider that has the experience to address apparel decoration needs is paramount. We have two staff artists who create anything we need and we partner with contractors to handle things we aren't set up for. Positioning ourselves as the shop that can handle any job creates customer loyalty. You can put together your own 'team' of affiliated creative professionals outside your shop."

Steve Freeman, Qdigitizing.com (asi/700501): "We don't refer our customers to competitors who service our primary digitizing skillset, but I've referred customers to firms that specialize in creative services. Our hope is the customer will come back to us for the digitizing. My experience is nine times out of 10 they come back for the work we do well."

Nicole M. Rollender

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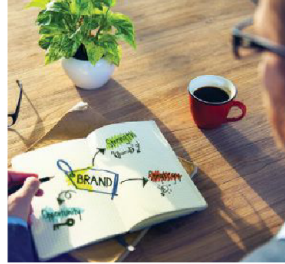
Get Your Stitch Report

Stitches Senior Staff Writer Theresa Hegel gives some tips on creating a winning branded apparel strategy for clients – like the finalists in the 2014 Big Decorating Challenge. Watch the latest edition of *The Stitch Report* on *Stitches.com*.



Podcast: The Ethics of Sourcing

Stitches Senior Staff Writer Theresa Hegel talks with Amrou Awaysheh, an assistant professor at Indiana University's Kelley School of Business, about how increasing transparency in apparel brands' supply chains will help prevent another tragedy like last year's Rana Plaza building collapse in Bangladesh. Listen on *Stitches.com*.



Follow the Brand Commandments

The stone-cold reality is that you're not too busy to build your own brand. Visit *Stitches.com* to read 10 ways that you can rehab your company image immediately.

SOCIAL FEEDS



We posted:
We want to know: What was your end-of-summer plan to get ready for the fourth quarter? And what's the best book you've recently read and why was it enjoyable?

YOU ANSWERED ERICH CAMPBELL

I do a quarterly strategy review and examine new technologies, niches and local business trends on which I've been collecting information. Then I write up a list of goals, plans and milestones. As for the fun: The latest book I read wasn't necessarily fun, but it was very useful (though I haven't done much with the practices therein yet). It's called *The Accidental Creative* by Todd Henry, and it's well worth the read. I've been filling my head with a great deal of work on creativity, and everyone says I need a schedule and consistency, even in my creative work, so that will be part of my fourth-quarter strategy to be sure.

CATHY CATTLE

I check inventory of supplies to be ready for the rush of last-minute holiday shoppers, but I don't want shelves to still be full at the end of the year. It's a balancing act. As for the best book, I haven't done a lot of reading lately, but I've jumped on the *Zentangle Method* wagon for a little more freedom on the creative side.

AIMEE STEARNS

We clean the shop to make way for the sweat-shirt wave that's coming. Book? *Game of Thrones*.



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Hate #FantasyFootball but love the competition? Here's a chic alternative ow.ly/AYH23

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Will Apple Payments Resurrect Google Wallet?: Google's near-field communications (NFC) based Google Wallet launched with enormous fanfare in 2011. mklnd.com/1tX8qrk

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Why you need to keep your business fresh and current: ow.ly/ARxDK

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5 futuristic food wrappers that you don't have to throw away: wrld.cm/Z5XA6

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Learn how to render short, detailed hair in Illustrator. Try it out: bit.ly/1q7d05h

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Did you know EnMart is on Pinterest? Stop by and see our boards! pinterest.com/enmartian/

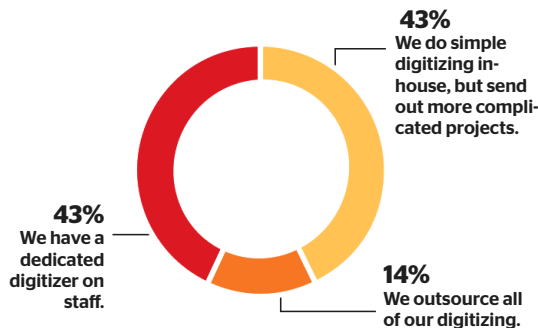
@HUFFINGTONPOST

The 11 greatest foodie cities in America huff. to/1CmFicD

INDUSTRY POLL

At *Stitches.com*, we recently asked:

How does your shop handle its digitizing needs?



BLOG EXCERPT

On Links and Needles An Honest Appraisal: Logging and Analysis



Progress. We all want to move toward some goal, some sort of improvement. ... The problem is that so many of us have no idea where to start, and even when we have a concept about how we should approach this path to our own development, we don't know how to maintain our efforts or measure our returns. This is why we need to start quantifying and recording our work. Though there are myriad apps and tools for tracking business ... the tools are less important than the reasoning behind the tracking and the method by which we apply them – it can be summed up in a few simple steps.

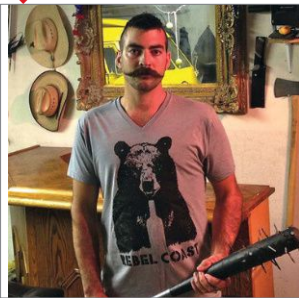
Scan this code to read the entire blog entry by Erich Campbell, digitizer and e-commerce manager at Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415).



Pinterest

Check out the following designs that we pinned on Stitches' Pinterest page – from the *Screen-Printed Designs* and *Cool Embroidery Designs* Boards.

From the Board: Screen-Printed Designs



This V-neck tee from Next Level Apparel (asi/73867; circle 80 on Free Info Card) was screen printed for Rebel Coast Winery in California, rebelcoast.com.



Kotis Design (asi/244898; circle 97 on Free Info Card) designed and printed this T-shirt from Bella+Canvas (asi/39590; circle 98 on Free Info Card) as a promotion for the Washington State Alumni Association, kotisdesign.com.



This shirt was printed with organic and naturally renewable inks, and features prints on the front left chest, back and sleeve by Boxercraft (asi/41325; circle 76 on Free Info Card), boxercraft.com, which was the winner of *Wearables* magazine's August 2014 Top Decorator competition.



This screen print was done in multicolor flock by Charlie Taublieb, founder of Taublieb Consulting and member of the Academy of Screen & Digital Printing Technology, taubliebconsulting.com.

From the Board: Cool Embroidery Designs



This 11"-high pillow design for a vintage/antique company has 70,000 stitches. It took three hours to digitize with Wilcom E3 and one-and-a-half hours of sewing out on Amaya XTS 2013 in Madeira thread. By Jorge Yadid, owner of Centennial, CO-based A.D.E. & Consulting, appareldecoration.com.



Hollyhocks in thread design by textile artist Kaffe Fassett, kaffefassett.com.



The Hana sweatshirt (FL688) includes a full-zip front, long cut, funnel neck and princess seams. It's made of 60/40 cotton/poly slub fleece, perfect for embroidery or embossing from Tri-Mountain (asi/92125; circle 87 on Free Info Card), trimountain.com.



Cross-stitch design by embroiderer Jamie Chalmers, aka Mr. X Stitch, mrxstitch.com.

Visit Stitches' Pinterest page – and all of our great boards – at Pinterest.com/stitchesmag.

INTERACT

Letters

School Spirit

I'm president of Brown Distributing Co. Inc., dba Riginals by Ruth, an embroidery and gift business. Our monograms that personalize the many original items we furnish make great gifts. We're located in Stillwater, OK, home of Oklahoma State University. We're licensed to embroider the Oklahoma State logo.

Ruth Brown

Brown Distributing Co., Inc., dba Riginals by Ruth, Stillwater, OK

Sister Act

My sister Rosemary Farner owns Bright Beginnings, based in Palm Bay, FL. I'm in Ohio, but we're able to function well as a small business doing a variety of projects for clients

in Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Florida and Ohio.

Fran Crouch

Bright Beginnings, West Salem, OH

Giving Thanks

We've been commercial embroiderers since 1990. This Thanksgiving, we'll celebrate the start of our 25th year. Hard to believe! I have two employees, one of whom has been here for 12 years. We stay very busy with our own work as well as work for two contract promotional products companies in our area.

Mary K. Evers

Mary K's Stitch in Time Inc., Palm Harbor, FL

Just Setting Out

I started my business as a

“We've been commercial embroiderers since 1990. This Thanksgiving, we'll celebrate the start of our 25th year. Hard to believe! ”

Mary K. Evers, Mary K's Stitch in Time Inc.

hobby. I'm new to embroidery, and I've been doing small orders for my church, friends and family, as well as gifts to friends.

Enerly Lucena

Enerly's Sweets, Powder Springs, GA

Support for Small Businesses

We operate one four-head ZSK machine and one single-head ZSK. We deal mostly with small businesses, having

embroidered for them for the past four years.

Bonita Hadley

Premier Printing & Embroidery, Hillsboro, NH

Learning New Things

I recently purchased a 10-needle embroidery machine, and I'm anxious to begin the journey into learning, creating and selling with this equipment.

Elaine O'Neal

Ingenious Threads, Linden, NJ

Loyal Stitches Reader

I operate a small home-based business. I use a six-needle Babylock machine, and I've been reading *Stitches* since May 2007.

Mary Wong

Team Golden Designs, Foresthill, CA

VOILA!

The Best Piece I Ever Embroidered



“We made this hoodie and crewneck sweatshirt for the California Roots Music and Arts Festival and its accompanying clothing line. My son launched the online store for the event, held every May, and we've been embellishing items for it. For the hoodie and crewneck, we used a Melco AMAYA XTS to create the distressed appliqué from Stahls' Any Word. Any Way. line of custom templates. Check out the event merchandise at www.californiarootsmerch.com.”

Submitted by Debby Labrucherie, owner and decorator at Double L Designs, Discovery Bay, CA; doublel22@prodigy.net

TALK TO US!

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



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INTERACT

Expert Weigh-In

Two Stitches Big Decorating Challenge judges weigh in on launching a branded apparel program, including initial questions to ask clients, important graphics details to consider during art production and the best logo placement for optimal branding.

Q. *What questions should you ask in an initial consultation with a client who wants to launch an apparel program?*



Erich Campbell, embroidery digitizer/designer and e-commerce manager of Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415): Attempt a

complete customer interview so you can find out what your customer really needs, rather than what they think they want. Knowing a customer's actual needs makes a big difference when you have to present them with your suggestions or if their initial ideas turn out to be not feasible. Specifically, ask about the intended audience for the apparel, both the people who'll wear it and the people who'll see it; for uniforms, take into account both the employees and the customers of a given business. Certainly ask standard questions about color, type of garment/accessories they have in mind and fabric choices. But if you add questions about the intended result the customer would like to see from the apparel, the kind of reactions they want to get, the culture of the company or brand, and goals they want to achieve, then you can help shape their vision as it comes to a decorated-apparel solution.

This much depth isn't always necessary, but for the customer who has a sense of what they want and who they are, it can make a huge difference to their perception of your professionalism and your investment in their business. Some customers won't want this level of attention, but for those who do, the difference between "What kind of shirts do you want?" and a sincere interview about the direction of their company can be the difference

between seeming like a replaceable service versus a valued, engaged partner.



Geri Finio, owner of Studio 187:

I'd suggest bringing a graphic artist into the conversation about brand design. Artists have the skills necessary for scale and balance and this is critical with any design created for embroidery. The original artwork benefits from a skilled artist drawing. Often, I'll receive Word documents with TrueType lettering, and then a clip art image through in. The scale for the text to the clip art might be completely out of balance. Cutting corners in the artwork that will represent the brand is never a good idea. A graphic artist skilled in the conversion of ink-on-paper to thread-on-fabric spells success.

Q. *When a client asks your team to create a logo from scratch or rework an existing one, what are some important details to consider?*

EC: Think of the most common usages of the logo; we're often focused on apparel, but if the logo will also be used for large signage or reduced for printing on pens, think about how it'll perform in different media, in various sizes and multiple color ways. Make sure it reflects the company's brand and culture, and also take technical matters into account head-on. This doesn't mean one treatment of the logo that works for all things – the best marks can stay recognizable and maintain their credit in tailored versions that look at the limitations of each use. Reactive logos that cooperate with their environment are more popular in this world of responsive websites and design.

GF: Consider sizing and placement. For example, if a logo consists of initials followed by "Professional Corp.," it's important to balance the two elements. The initials (or logo) shouldn't overpower the text or be too small to read. In any rescaling, everything will scale proportionately. The design height and width should also be considered by the artist.

Q. *When multiple garments will be embellished, what should shops consider about logo and design location?*

EC: Balance the amount of information presented, like a website address, with the legibility and the look of the design. If you essentially reproduce business card information on the left chest of a garment, you'll have a cluttered design. You might present "information," but if the design looks busy or ugly, there's little point, especially when space restrictions mean the text is often too small to read. When was the last time you noted or wrote down a phone number or website from someone's polo shirt or cap? If you're printing large back prints on tees, you can include more, but to place a company logo, name, phone number and URL on a left chest bogs down the garment. Though simplicity isn't everything, it's hard to imagine the great logomarks of any of our most beloved companies bogged down with text and details. Why would we treat our own small businesses any differently?

GF: I'm definitely a strong advocate against small text in embroidery. Designs that flow and offer a little forgiveness in alignment and/or density are much better on a finished piece with large quantities. The simpler, the better.



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INTERACT

Phil Stitch Answers



Got a question for Phil?

If you can't find what you're looking for in the 2014 Sourcing Guide, write to: *Stitches*, Attn: Phil Stitch, 4800 Street Rd., Treviso, 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.

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

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Hammer Brothers
www.hammerbrothers.com | 800.321.2351

KYS Embroidery Supplies
www.kysembroiderysupplies.com | 781.837.1184

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www.llovet.com | 800.476.5149

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www.smercristall.com | 800.800.9983

Texas Specialties
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I have a client looking for Softe brand shorts for a cheerleading group. - Tess

Give me an H! For Heritage Sportswear + Virginia T's (asi/60582); (800) 537-2222; www.heritagesportswear.com. The Juniors' Jersey Short (M037), the Juniors' Novelty Jersey Short (37V) and the Juniors' Team Novelty Shorty Short (081VPR) will be a perfect fit for the cheerleaders.

Stop at One Stop Inc. (asi/75085); (800) 968-7550; www.onestopinc.com; for the Juniors' New Softe Short (SF012), the Softe Juniors' Pocket Short (SF014) and more.

My customer is finally planning ahead. She wants sarongs for resort guests to wear at the beach and pool. - Dee

Kick back with the Seaside Sarong (SEASRG) from Towel Specialties (asi/91605); (800) 938-6935; www.towelspecialties.com. Other beach-worthy options include the Sarong Wrap Skirt with Tie Closure (0601) from Fast Lane Clothing Co. Inc. (asi/53753); (800) 959-0126; www.toucan.dance.com; it's casual, and made of cotton.

Your customer can also warm up to Sun N Sand Accessories (asi/90142); (800) 635-0846; www.sunnsandline.com; the Long Sarong (PR25) and the Short Sarong (PR25S) are both available in 13 hot summer colors.

I need to find women's cotton (or cotton blend) T-shirt with long sleeves in chocolate brown? You're the best, Phil! - AJ

Chocolate is sweet, and so are you! As for the elusive shirt shade, start with the Ladies' 5.5-oz. Combed Ringspun Jersey Long Sleeve Tee (3588) from Atlantic Coast Cotton (asi/37355); (800) 262-5660; www.acinfo.com. It's made of cotton jersey and softly shaped for a classic, feminine fit.

Alternately, the Long Sleeve Tee (5186) from Staton Corporate and Casual (asi/89380); (800) 950-6611; www.statononline.com; consists of 100% ringspun cotton with rib-knit cuffs and a tagless label.

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By Theresa Hegel

ASI Promocar Rules the Road

Attendees of the ASI Show Chicago this summer were greeted with something a little bit different by *Stitches'* parent company, the Advertising Specialty Institute. The ASI Promocar, a 2002 Mazda decked out in all manner of promotional products, was part of a social media and marketing campaign dubbed "Driving Serious Fun."

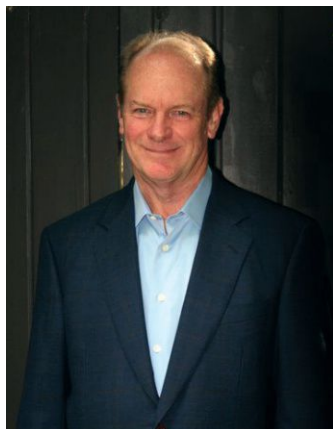
Nine employees spent three days in the ASI warehouse gluing logoed mouse pads, pens, flip-flops and other items to the artcar. When the Promocar was complete – and road-tested at 60 mph to ensure the products were secured – it was ready for the 750-mile drive from ASI headquarters in Trevose, PA, to Chicago.

ASI employees Dawn Shurmaitis and Samantha Phillips made the long trip in one day, giving out gift bags to strangers who gawked at



ASI Chairman Norman Cohn adds his signature to the Promocar.

the decorated vehicle. The publicity stunt also garnered the attention of several media outlets along the way, including a write-up in *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland. During the long interstate journey, the Promocar suffered only one promotional casualty, losing a single pen along the way, according to Shurmaitis.



GroupeSTAHL Appoints CEO

GroupeSTAHL has appointed Chris Lawson as CEO. Lawson is the former chief financial officer and executive vice president of Ross Roy Advertising, a billion-dollar private advertising/marketing services company. He led the development and execution of a strategic growth plan there that

helped the regional company become one of the top five in its industry in the United States. Lawson also has entrepreneurial experience, managing and investing in several development projects.

"We are more than confident that Chris's proven financial, operations, leadership and business-building skills will take GroupeSTAHL into the future," says Ted Stahl, executive chairman. "His mission is to unify the efforts of GroupeSTAHL companies around the globe, strengthening our ability to bring you the textile-printing products and services you need to grow your business."

Proforma Distributors Acquire Printing Co.

Steve Flaughers, owner of Proforma 3rd Degree Mar-

keting, and Dick Kulick, owner of Proforma Excalibur Business Solutions, acquired Hyde Brothers Printing Co. Financial terms of the transaction were not released, but the acquired company will now be known as Hyde Brothers Printing and Marketing.

Together, Flaughers and Kulick plan to extend the business's offerings to include promotional items, multimedia services, branded apparel, mobile marketing and website design. Hyde Brothers has been in the commercial printing business for more than a century. Flaughers and Kulick were able to complete the transaction thanks to participation in a mergers and acquisition program offered by Proforma (asi/300094). The mergers team guided them through the buying process.

Event Calendar

Nov. 3-4, Hyannis, MA
New England Apparel Club Show
(781) 326-9223
www.neacshow.com

Nov. 11-12, Wethersfield, CT
New England Apparel Club Show
(781) 326-9223
www.neacshow.com

Nov. 16-19, Ocean City, MD
Ocean City Resort Gift Expo
(678) 285-3976; www.oceancitygiftshow.com

DECEMBER

Dec. 7-10, Myrtle Beach, SC
Grand Strand Gift & Resort Merchandise Show
(678) 285-3976; www.grandstrandgiftshow.com



58%

of American adults have a smartphone.

Source: Pewinternet.org

A Dress a Day Keeps the Doctor Away

In May, Lillian Weber will turn 100. By then, the Iowa woman plans to have sewn 1,000 dresses for African girls in need. She has a good start, making one dress every day for the past two years. “It’s just what I like to do,” Weber tells *The Quad-City Times*.

By August, Weber had donated more than 840 handmade frocks to Little Dresses for Africa, a Christian nonprofit that distributes them to impoverished young girls around the world. The clothing is sent to orphanages, churches and schools in Africa with the goal of providing self-worth to the world’s most vulnerable girls, according to organization’s website. The nonprofit has collected more than 2.5 million dresses, distributed to 47 countries in Africa, as well as Haiti, Honduras, Thailand and Mexico.



Weber starts each dress in the morning and, after a midday break, finishes the garment in the afternoon. “She personalizes them all,” Weber’s daughter Linda tells WQAD-TV, adding that each dress has something special on the front to give it her mother’s unique touch.

After she meets her 1,000-dress goal, Weber has no plans to slow down. “When I get to that thousand, if I’m able to, I won’t quit,” she tells WQAD-TV. “I’ll go at it again.”

A Skill for a Better Life

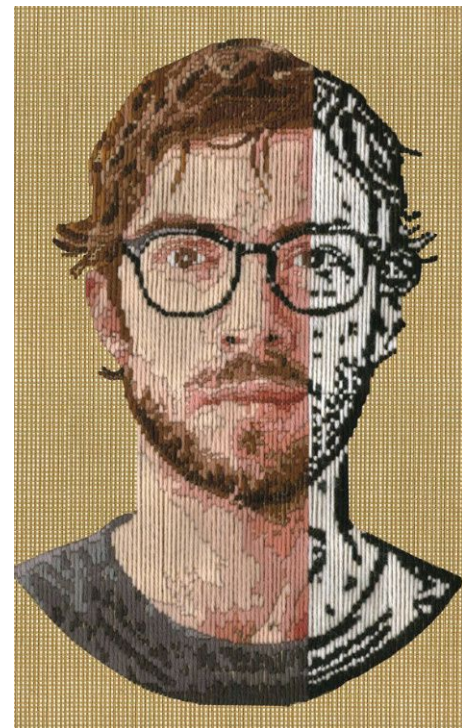


For the last three years, a Massachusetts woman has been teaching Haitian women how to embroider, helping villagers develop a money-earning skill so they can afford to send their children to school and pay for basic necessities. “This would give them a little independence from their spouse and, most importantly, invite them to feel good about themselves,” Patricia L. Monroe tells news site *MassLive.com*.

Monroe has been sewing since she was 6 years old, and learned to embroider in 1974, taught by

her husband’s grandmother. When her children were young, Monroe had a cottage sewing industry, making and embroidering dresses for a local Irish step-dancing school.

Every February, Monroe and a group of teenagers travel to the village of Desab as part of The Haiti Plunge, a cross-cultural educational initiative that has been sending mission teams to the country for nearly three decades. Prior to the trip, the teens themselves learn to embroider so they can teach new stitches to the Haitian women. The Haitian women’s completed work is sold in Catholic parishes in Massachusetts.



Digitized by Hand

Australian needlepoint artist Catherine Tipping uses stitches to stand in for pixels in her embroidery series “Filter,” which marries the digital arts with analog textile techniques. Her intricate textile portraits include glitch-like stylizations to “create a tension between the labor-intensive character of stitching wool and the complexities of digital image making,” according to the artist’s website.

Tipping explains that both embroidery and digital images are symbols, stand-ins for reality. “The digital image is sampled and mapped as a grid of dots or picture elements. . . . Digital images mimic reality, they have photographic credibility although never filmed,” Tipping writes. In the same way, embroidery is symbolic: “My hand and the needle act as the sign vehicle, the stitches as the symbol.”

View more of her work at Catherinetipping.com.



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SHOP MAKEOVER

Making the Move to a Bigger Shop

Since setting up shop in a larger location in February, Howard Potter, CEO of A&P Master Images (asi/702505), says he's given close to 300 tours. Something that has continued to surprise him is how many people praise the spotless showroom and polished production area as anomalies in the industry. "I was shocked," Potter says. "I didn't understand that we weren't the norm. It's one of those things that you don't believe until you see ... other shops and equipment that are downright disgusting."

Utica, NY-based A&P moved from a 4,200-square-foot space to a 5,500-square-foot building on a one-acre lot, giving the decorator plenty of room to grow. Setting

up the new building with a streamlined workflow in mind has helped the company increase efficiency by 33%, Potter says. Purchasing \$91,000 in new equipment, including a Workhorse Sabre automated press, hasn't hurt productivity either.

But one of the things Potter believes is too often ignored in the embroidery industry is cleanliness and organization. There's no point in spending so much on new equipment and new digs if you don't spend the money to maintain them. "That's like buying a nice car and not getting the oil changed in time," he says. This philosophy has led A&P to hire a part-time employee, who works 25 hours a week, specifically to keep the shop clean.



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DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Five Steps

By Tonia Kimbrough

Update a Classic Image With Neon Colors

Embroiderer Nancy Mini from Madeira USA demonstrates how to use specialty thread to make a stock design really stand out.

1

CHOOSE CONTEMPORARY COLORS.

This simple stock design ("Extra Scoops" from *Embroiderylibrary.com*) lent itself to a variety of color choices. Veering away from the obvious, Mini chose five new fluorescent colors that Madeira recently added to its Polyneon line of 100% polyester embroidery thread: four shades of pink and a lime green for the scoops of ice cream and a light brown for the sugar cone.

2

SELECT THREAD APPROPRIATE FOR THE PROJECT.

Since the ice cream cone is a stock design, you can assume it has been digitized for standard 40-weight rayon or polyester thread. For this project, the embroiderer chose fluorescent thread so the colors would pop against a dark background.

3

KEEP YOUR BACKGROUND FABRIC IN MIND.

A black canvas fabric was chosen for this design to make the fluorescent colors pop even more than they would on a lighter fabric. Since dark colors appear to recede, the black background seems to "push" bright fluorescents forward. Since canvas is a sturdy woven fabric and the design isn't very large, a lightweight tearaway backing was used, giving the backside of the fabric a clean look after the backing is removed.

4

PLAN STITCHES THAT COMPLEMENT THE DESIGN.

With only five colors to work with and three ice cream scoops, the balance of each color's different stitch type provided contrasting shading and texture. The lime green cross-hatch on the sugar cone offers a realistic look to an otherwise ordinary design.

TIP: Bright, intense colors like fluorescents carry more visual weight than neutral black, helping the cone to pop forward.



Madiera USA; circle 99 on Free Info Card.

5

HOOP AND EMBROIDER YOUR DESIGN.

Start by hooping your fabric and backing loosely, and then fingertighten the hoop screw to obtain the optimal grip. This works particularly well for multi-head machines, where you most likely have an extra set of hoops to prep your next batch.

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Decorating & Fabric Trends



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PENN EMBLEM CO. (ASI/77120); CIRCLE 101 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 793-7366.

Little Detail, Big Reward

Sometimes it's the little detail that makes the apparel. With fall sports in play, school teams and booster clubs seek simple ways to feature their crests and mascots.

Penn Emblem Co. (asi/77120) makes it easy with sports patches that can be customized in any style or color. Made of fade-resistant threads and quality backings, these emblems are durable and ideal for outdoor or indoor athletic events. They can be ironed or sewn onto jackets, jerseys or T-shirts. For a more traditional look, choose an embroidered poly twill patch. If applying a patch to performance apparel, consider PennTrans Transfers that are digitally printed in vibrant color and high definition. These heat transfers easily apply to a broad range of fabrics, including temperature-sensitive

performance textiles. They allow for stretch and recovery to ensure long-term durability.

One of the most subtle, yet effective ways to create detail is with pocket embellishment. Dress up any T-shirt, sports jersey, sweatshirt or jacket with a Dalco Sport Pocket, a custom-printed dye sublimation pocket. Virtually any pattern or design can be created, from school mascots to Greek crests to corporate logos, and printed on a pocket measuring 4.5" wide x 5.1" tall. The pocket is made of 100% polyester and can be attached using a stitch file for sewing or heat applied with a heat-seal adhesive. It's intended as a decorative look and can't be used as a functional pocket. There's a 10-piece minimum and additional quantities can be ordered in increments of five pieces.

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COMMERCIAL EMBROIDERY MACHINES



Get Schooled on Education

Education is a top market for the promotional apparel marketplace. Decorators can learn about maximizing profits from their school-related clients, as well as how to customize imprinting for the market and simplify art creation.

Transfer Express (asi/91804) offers a free webinar, "Back to School, Back to Custom Printing Profits." It's an overview of the specialized aspects of this diverse market and information for succeeding in it. Topics include an array of marketing and pricing tips. You'll learn the keys to succeeding with the many clubs and groups that need T-shirts, how to create artwork that sells, how to price school and gym uniforms and how to expand orders with add-on products using the same art. Go to www.transferexpress.com and click the "Help & Education" tab.

Great Dane Graphics offers a scholastic pack of stock designs including for groups involved in chess, theater, art and chemistry. These scholastic designs can be used to create screen-printed shirts, direct-to-garment prints, sublimation or digital transfers, or cut-vinyl designs. Visit www.greatdanegraphics.com.



GREAT DANE GRAPHICS; CIRCLE 102 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 829-0836.



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DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Saving 9

Expose Screens 30% Faster

Ryonet's DIY Print Shop Kit now has a new addition: the first-ever UV Screen Exposure Bulb, specifically designed to expose the kind of emulsion used in screen printing. What makes this bulb unique is the wavelength of light that it emits. Emulsion requires a nanometer measurement of between 360nm to 380nm to expose properly, which is exactly where the new UV bulb sits on the scale.

Previously, Ryonet's DIY Print Shop Kits included a 500-watt halogen light to be used for screen exposure. While these conventional bulbs work to expose screens given enough time, they're inefficient and require over 95% more



RYONET; CIRCLE 108 ON FREE INFO CARD.

energy than the new bulb takes. With only 25 watts of energy required, screen printers can now expose screens over 30% faster than before, saving both time and money. The new bulbs are also much safer, with a much lower heat output than the halogen lights previously provided.

Product Pick

Graphic Solutions Group offers a new pallet adhesive for increased flexibility. Top Bond by Chemical Consultants is a water-based adhesive that can be used to secure garments on pallets or belts for screen printing. It can be applied full-strength or diluted using a brush, roller or sprayer, and will remain tacky. Top Bond also can be used as a general adhesive to bond leather, rubber, canvas, paper, plastic, glass, wood, metal and concrete. It's available in one- and five-gallon containers and 55-gallon drums. For more information, visit www.GOGSG.com.

GRAPHIC SOLUTIONS GROUP; CIRCLE 109 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 366-1776.



Quick Tips

1

Help soccer moms support the team.

The Wild Side launches a new collection of soccer rhinestone transfers.

Twelve new multicolor designs have been added in a variety of full-front sizes. One design, "Live Your Goals," is perfect for any soccer fanatic.



WILD SIDE; CIRCLE 110 ON FREE INFO CARD.

2

Get precise.

Try Precision-Angle Tweezers

from Floriani. With an ultra-fine point, these tweezers allow for precise thread/stabilizer picking and also makes this an ideal tool for picking up crystals, beads and more. The tip of the tweezers also is handy for lifting the bobbin out of the bobbin case and extricating hard-to-reach threads caught in the machine take-up lever.



FLORIANI COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS; CIRCLE 111 ON FREE INFO CARD.

3

Create vibrant, four-color process designs on dark garments.

Cad-Color Solutions Opaque, a white, printable heat-applied media is used with an inkjet printer/cutter. This versatile material is designed for white and dark garments and will go on any type of fabric.



IMPRINTABLES WAREHOUSE (ASI/58475); CIRCLE 112 ON FREE INFO CARD.

Machine & Software Updates



HIRSCH INTERNATIONAL
(ASI/14982); CIRCLE 106
ON FREE INFO CARD OR
CALL (800) 394-4426.

PulseID Offers Affordable Automation

Efficiency is attainable for even the smallest of embroidery business with PulseID from Hirsch International (asi/14982). The automation and personalization software standardizes critical embroidery production processes and automates them so an operator doesn't have to repeatedly input information or reconfigure machine settings. It also speeds up the personalization process such as adding names or monograms by establishing a set of rules that determines the size, color and font needed for a specific order. Both these functions eliminate operator errors.

In addition, the program includes a toolkit that enables software and application developers to add embroidery functionality to a website. It allows the user to produce, manipulate and display personalized embroidery files on a website in the form of 3-D renderings. The Web modules allow customers to create their own embroidery designs online. Visitors can create a design in minutes and pay for it with a variety of options.

PulseID offers detailed, scalable reporting. Regardless of the number of machines, managers can analyze data such as stitches per minute, re-sews, run efficiency, thread breaks and turnaround time to ensure maximum production is being achieved. For more information visit www.hic.us.

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Look Book

Trends

By Alissa Tallman

APPAREL

Neon

Neon numbers are all over the runways: select neon pieces in lemon-lime from Armani; artful, short-sleeved topcoats in scintillating orange and luminescent cobalt from Dior; and neon jackets, dresses and handbags from Kenzo.

“Neon is extremely popular and won’t phase out anytime soon,” says Jamie Henry, product development manager at Boxercraft (asi/41325). “Neon made a comeback with the throwback trends of 1980s-inspired apparel and accessories. You always see bright, bold colors in the dance and cheer world, but this trend has held steady in regular retail apparel and accessories. Neon orange has been a major standout color and will continue to be, as evidenced in recent runway shows.”

Neons project an upbeat, optimistic “energy” and can be an asset in a promotional situation. “When applied to apparel and accessories, neon is vibrant, energizing and youthful,” Henry says. “Consider neon for a promotional campaign where you want to make a bold statement with high impact, especially an event that delivers a high-energy message and involves youth and young adult audiences,” Henry says.



These sporty neon running shorts (P62NOSTR) can be found at Boxercraft (asi/41325; circle 76 on Free Info Card).



A M C Special Markets (asi/30198; circle 77 on Free Info Card) distributes this luxe neon totebag (35JS4321-Neon).



This soft 3/4-sleeve raglan tee (6951) is available from Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788; circle 78 on Free Info Card); decorated by Kellie Gibson of Denison, TX-based Kellie's Kreations (circle 79 on Free Info Card).



PHOTO: CATWALKING

◀ Apparel: Neon

Kenzo was one high-fashion designer to innovatively implement neon into his fall/winter lineup. This textured, slicker-esque men's jacket, which was showcased during Paris Fashion Week, takes the neon trend to new and impressively daring heights in terms of color.



Next Level Apparel (asi/73867; circle 80 on Free Info Card) carries this comfy neon deep V-neck tee (3540); decorated by Kevin Orga of Pittsburgh-based Embroidered Apparel Solutions (circle 81 on Free Info Card).

Trends

COLOR

Cognac

Pantone's cognac – a gorgeously subtle smoky brown that's reminiscent of milk chocolate – is playing a starring role in fall/winter collections from Givenchy, Emilio Pucci and Louis Vuitton. This updated alternative to basic brown pairs beautifully with the palest pastels, such as yellow, coral and lavender.

“Brown and its fellow rich, earthy tones are trending this fall,” says Kacie Vitucci, principal designer at Timbuk2 (asi/91272). “You can't go wrong with this classic. It's down to earth and a superb autumn substitute for black.”

Vitucci points out how effective brown is as a pairing hue. “The key to any great color is pairing it with others and watching them bring out the best in each other,” she says. “The beauty of brown is that it can be used as a strong neutral amongst a diverse palette of colors.”

Vitucci also mentions this color's tendency to evoke a sense of comfort and coziness: “Brown in all shades always evokes warmth, whether contrasted with a cool blue or complimented by a fiery orange,” she says.

PHOTO: FRANCOIS DURAND



This toasty women's sherpa fleece hoodie (MHT100W) can be found at Stormtech Performance Apparel Ltd. (asi/89864; circle 82 on Free Info Card).



Timbuk2 (asi/91272; circle 83 on Free Info Card) carries this hipster-friendly, roomy messenger bag (269-4-3090).



◀ **Color: Cognac**
Neutrals led the way in Givenchy's latest collection during Paris Fashion Week, especially varying, luxurious shades of brown. This gorgeous leather coat and its equally opulent fur collar both highlight the hue and demonstrate its remarkably grounding effect and timeless appeal.

Driving Impressions (asi/50864; circle 84 on Free Info Card) distributes these stylish Adidas “Evil Cross” sunglasses (AD-a410-6050).

Look Book

Trends

EMBELLISHMENT

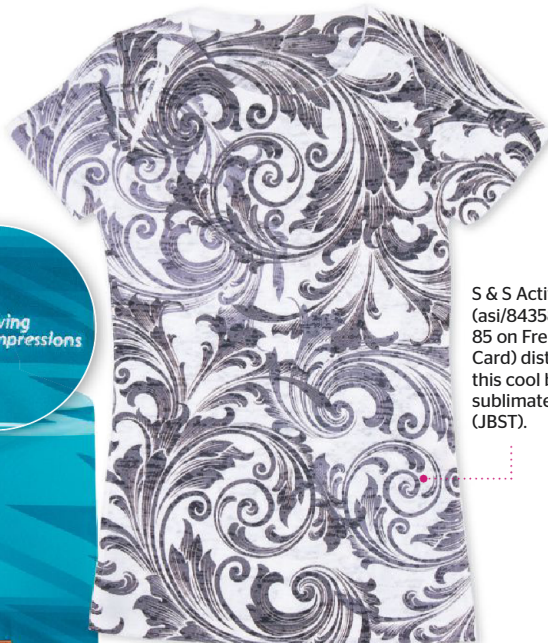
Digital Designs

Prints are rampant in the fashion world and have helped pave the way for all-over sublimated designs. From Agatha Ruiz de la Prada's latest collection to Marc Jacobs' sporty logo-infused lineup, sublimated techniques remain in the fashion spotlight.

Digital printing is one of the biggest developments ever in the apparel industry," says Nan Napier in her recent *El Paso Inc.* article, "Technology Strikes Again: Digital Prints Invade Fashion": "When you add to that popularity these new digital prints – think full-color designs printed directly onto fabrics in one process – you've got one noteworthy fashion development."

This upsurge has been due to the improvements in technology. "Traditionally, printed textiles and wallpapers were the domain of screen printers. However, the introduction and development of digital inkjet technology and specially developed inks have fuelled the trend for smaller digital runs of printed fabrics," reports FESPA, a global organization that caters to the digital-print industry.

This eclectic sublimated-print polo (567544) with an embroidered logo can be found at Driving Impressions (asi/50864; circle 84 on Free Info Card).



S & S Activewear (asi/84358; circle 85 on Free Info Card) distributes this cool burnout sublimated tee (JBST).



PHOTO: ARUN NEVADER



◀ Embellishment: Sublimated Designs

Mark Jacobs featured sublimated digital designs in a Japanese-inspired style in a large percentage of his "Marc" fall/winter collection, which was showcased during New York Fashion Week. Digital-printed logos and sports-themed visual accents were stamped on apparel and accessories of all kinds, from exercise pants to jackets and even handkerchiefs.

This picturesque soft-shell jacket (3093) featuring digital designing on the sleeves is available from Bishop, The Garment Co. (asi/40585; circle 86 on Free Info Card).

Showcase: Sports Apparel

Over the past year, the variety and availability of quality athletic and sports-themed apparel have reached epic proportions.

Jeff Silcock, marketing manager for Stormtech Performance Apparel Ltd. (asi/89864), highlights the enhanced versatility of this season's sportswear. "Today's athletic apparel doesn't just include moisture-wicking shirts for the gym. It also includes high-tech soft-shell jackets and performance fleece products, which benefit the end-user during athletic activities and when worn casually," he says. "Having versatility in your apparel usage creates a better end-user experience. Customers can use these products for multiple activities and receive a stronger return on the product value."

Compression tops are another top contender. "Short- and long-sleeve compression tops are very unique pieces of apparel," says John Perez, marketing representative for Tri-Mountain (asi/92125). "They're popular with sports teams and are incredibly versatile. They can be worn under a polo, a jacket or a jersey." He expects these tees to meet with continued sales success and that they represent an ideal branding opportunity. "From a sales perspective, the trend will be most positive for athletics-based customers and can easily be an additional part of a branded apparel package for them," he says.



Tri-Mountain (asi/92125; circle 87 on Free Info Card) carries this men's crewneck compression tee (K604SS); choose from black, navy or white.

This stylish Puma hoodie (567010) is available from Driving Impressions (asi/50864; circle 84 on Free Info Card); choose from fuchsia-heather or black-heather.

King Par LLC (asi/64861; circle 88 on Free Info Card) distributes this windproof and water-resistant Nike women's jacket (627187).

This lightweight jacket (TRS-1W) from Stormtech Performance Apparel Ltd. (asi/89864; circle 82 on Free Info Card) features a water-resistant outer shell, stowable hood and adjustable hem; decorated by Milwaukee-based Visual Impressions (asi/734150; circle 113 on Free Info Card).

You can find this women's striped polo (2516) at Charles River Apparel (asi/44620; circle 89 on Free Info Card). Choose from several colors, including ocean blue, lavender and navy; decorated by Dundee, OR-based Busy Hands Embroidery (circle 90 on Free Info Card).

Mega Cap Inc. (asi/70434; circle 91 on Free Info Card) distributes this multi-toned baseball cap (6994); decorated by Dundee, OR-based Busy Hands Embroidery (circle 90 on Free Info Card).

Look Book

Niche: Holiday Designs

The holidays are all about embellishing. Lee Romano Sequeira, co-owner of Sparkle Plenty Designs Inc. (asi/88442), says bling is still a top selection for holiday-apparel décor. “Many businesses want to spread a little cheer to their team-building programs, with employee incentives or just to provide a fun gift for everyone to wear at the annual holiday party,” she says. “Bling can make that happen in a very unique way while showing off a company’s lighter side. Once I feel that wonderful Christmas cheer in the air, I turn into a kid again. What better way to celebrate the holiday season than with a little sparkle?”

Erich Campbell, e-commerce manager for Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415), also discusses the “sparkle” side of decorating but in terms of metallic threads and fabrics. “There’s been a significant resurgence of metallic fabrics on the winter runways that really makes me think of holiday decorations,” he says. “With the increase in metallic materials in our decorating supplies in the last year, I’m betting more of us will be creating shiny looks in the coming months.” In addition to metallics, Campbell includes rich and vibrant colors in the mix. “The holidays are always a season for rich jewel tones and specialty threads,” he says.

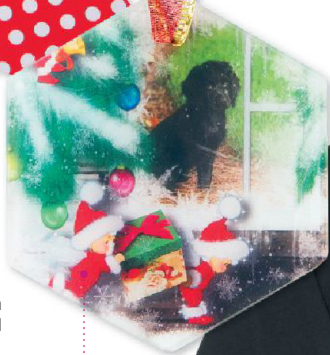
This attractive wrap top, sporting a subtle Christmas tree in metallic thread on the right hip, hails from Albuquerque-based Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415; circle 92 on Free Info Card).



This apron, ideal for wine aficionados, includes both embroidery and rhinestones; decorated by Jane Swanzy, owner of Houston-based Swan Marketing LLC (circle 93 on Free Info Card).



Pam Augspurger, owner of Piedmont, SC-based Dream Maker Embroidery & More (circle 94 on Free Info Card), created a monogrammed stocking with metallic thread and this exquisite sublimated glass ornament.



Wildwood Crest, NJ-based Sandpiper Embroidery (circle 96 on Free Info Card) designed this adorable blanket with a seashore-themed Santa Claus.



This crewneck sweatshirt, sporting whimsical holiday designs in bling, are from Philadelphia-based Sparkle Plenty Designs Inc. (asi/88442; circle 95 on Free Info Card).

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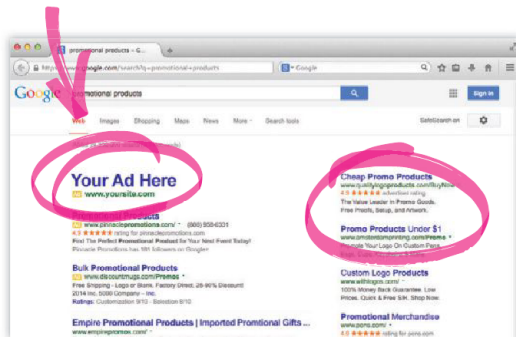
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BIG

decorating

CHALLENGE

The winning decorating teams used their creativity and business smarts to create a unified, functional apparel solution for a fictional, but demanding client.



by **THERESA HEGEL,**
SARA LAVENDUSKI *and*
RACHEL ABRAHAM



If you want to stand out in the decorated-apparel business, you need to do more than just sell logoed shirts. You also have to brand and sell yourself as a consultant, becoming the go-to person whenever a client has questions about embellished apparel. “You can get T-shirts anywhere; you can’t get solutions and quality everywhere,” says Erich Campbell, digitizer/e-commerce manager at Albuquerque, NM-based Black Duck Inc. (asi/140730). “If you become a consultant, you’re much more valuable. If you make things easy and you help clients with solutions to their branding and marketing dilemmas, that’s part of the value you’re selling.”

That was the idea behind *Stitches’* new competition, the Big Decorating Challenge. We wanted embroidery shops to flex their creative and marketing muscles by meeting a fictional company’s real-world requirements. So, we created Graham’s Greenery, a nursery and landscaping company with a long history and established clientele. The business is poised to expand into multiple locations and wanted a new, cohesive look for employees, whether they work behind the counter, in the greenhouse or in a client’s front yard. Decorating teams had to design a professional, adaptable logo that unifies the brand, exuding the look of craftsmanship and quality, without losing the down-to-earth heritage of Graham’s Greenery. The team also had to choose three pieces of workwear – a polo, a cap and an apron – for either a male or female employee on which to execute their original designs.

As might be expected, entries arrived in a sea of green, with an abundance of leaves stitched in various spots. The looks that really stood out chose bold colors and unexpected elements – like the stylized hummingbird fluttering atop our Grand Prize Winner’s logo. All five top teams displayed an eye for design and a technical acumen. They took a thoughtful approach to apparel, choosing garments not just for their aesthetics, but with their client’s needs in mind – picking items for their moisture-wicking and sun protection properties to benefit employees working outside. The finalists each created unified solutions that Graham’s Greenery could easily adapt to outfit all its employees.



METHODOLOGY

Decorators created an original logo and apparel solution for Graham’s Greenery, a fictional nursery and landscaping company. Entrants submitted a polo shirt, cap and apron to sew out their designs, sending the digitizing file for judging as well. In the initial round of judging, the designs were rated in three categories: originality of artwork, embroidery workmanship and decorated apparel presentation. The judges selected 10 semi-finalists to move on to the second round of judging, which evaluated the quality of the design’s digitizing, paring the competition down to five finalists. The grand prize winner and two runners-up were chosen, based on their overall performance in both rounds of judging.

*Note: Once the top three winners were selected, we asked them to submit a complementing male or female look to illustrate a complete decorated apparel solution.

CHALLENGE:
DESIGN AN ORIGINAL LOGO AND APPAREL SOLUTION FOR GRAHAM’S GREENERY, AN ESTABLISHED NURSERY AND LANDSCAPING COMPANY.

THE CLIENT PROFILE:

Graham’s Greenery has been operating in your shop’s local area for more than 20 years. It started as a boutique nursery and garden supply shop, and has expanded to include a thriving landscaping and maintenance arm. In addition, the business hosts popular classes for local gardeners through its education program. Graham’s management team is beginning to consider expanding into multiple locations, thanks to its local popularity, its modest customer fan base and its recent local TV appearances that have broadened its audience. Management also wants to appeal to businesses that have been inquiring about maintenance/design services, as well as to do-it-yourself customers.

WHAT THE CLIENT WANTS:

- An original logo design that’s cohesive, professional and adaptable to both workwear and business-casual garments.
- The logo and workwear should unify the brand, exuding the look of craftsmanship and quality, without losing the down-to-earth, solid quality of the existing brand.
- The logo and workwear should increase the nursery’s presence, and differentiate Graham’s Greenery from any other local nurseries.

The Shop:

**TEAM-
WORLD
CORPORATE
PROGRAMS**

(ASI/342534), BINGHAMTON, NY



Artist:
**HEATHER
BURLISON**



Digitizer:
**DAVE
SHEARS**



Embroiderer:
**ADELE
BROCK**



Other:
**DAVID
WOZNIAK**
(packaging/
presentation)

Colorful and full of life, this iconic hummingbird logo is a bold branding statement, expertly embroidered. The perfect marriage of creative design and production-friendly digitizing, it was the clear top choice.

The Solution:

TOOLS OF THE TRADE: The artwork was digitized using software from Pulse Microsystems, stitched out with Robison-Anton 40-weight rayon and polyester thread on a Tajima machine.

POLO: The Men's Performance Polo (K540) and Ladies Silk Touch Performance Polo (L540) from SanMar (asi/84863) both feature an 8,900-stitch logo with six colors.

CAP: The Garment-Washed Cap (PWU) from SanMar also has artwork with 8,900 stitches and six colors.

APRON: The Port Authority Full-Length Apron (A500) from SanMar sports artwork with 8,900 stitches and six colors.

Original Artwork:

TeamWorld Corporate Programs combined hand-drawn lettering with a more professional sans serif font for the Graham's Greenery logo to show off the brand's quality,



uniqueness and craftsmanship, according to Heather Burlison, graphic designer. After choosing the fonts, the team initially focused on leaves for the design's centerpiece, but after feedback from colleagues, took a different tack. "That's when someone suggested we create a hummingbird in thread," Burlison says. "It's more than trees and flowers, and it can also stand on its own as an icon for the brand." The design caught the eyes of the judges, particularly Liz Hathaway, creative manager at Penn Emblem Co. (asi/77120). "The hummingbird is great for brand recognition," she says.

Embroidery:

TeamWorld's embroidery specialist Adele Brock described the stitch-out of their entry as "smooth sailing," saying there were no production challenges. Hathaway and the other judges loved the design's thread colors, but recommended tweaking the color of "Graham's" on the dark polo shirt to improve readability. Judge Geri Finio, owner of Studio 187, admired the link between the bird's wing and a leaf, which, she says, "combines the professionalism of the nursery with a whimsical logo." She also praised the "excellent use of stabilizer."

Decorated Apparel Presentation:

TeamWorld based its apparel decisions on color, choosing a deep teal tech polo from SanMar. The full-length apron

and soft garment-washed cap were also SanMar picks. The moisture-wicking polo shirt is "lightweight, it keeps employees fresh and it can easily take the wearer from a day job to dinner and drinks after work," Brock says. The judges liked that TeamWorld also considered the needs of Graham's outdoor employees and chose a shirt with performance features. Another touch that upped the perceived value for the judges was TeamWorld's decision to package the garments in a custom box.

Digitizing:

TeamWorld's design displayed both technical proficiency and creativity, according to the judges. "This is a very solid, artistically rendered design that's well thought out and purposefully digitized," says Erich Campbell, digitizer/e-commerce manager at Black Duck Inc. "The garments lie well, the hat has great coverage and the addition of the iconic hummingbird as a back arch embellishment was fantastic. This is what good corporate embroidery looks like." The digitizer took a production-minded approach, with good trims, jumps and locks, and color sequencing that wasn't excessive. The one area for improvement is stiffness in the embroidery, with too much density where the shading lies over the ground fill in the flower atop the letter "H" and the hummingbird's center, he notes. The satin stitches could also have less density.

WHAT THEY WON

GRAND PRIZE:

TeamWorld Corporate Programs received a Melco EMT16 embroidery machine and full digitizing software package, valued at \$25,000. The 16-needle, 1,500-spm EMT16 features an improved user interface, acti-feed thread tension, precise laser registration, an adjustable presser foot, a small cylindrical lower arm, and a high-performance trimmer and hook. The winner also received a \$250 gift certificate from Madeira USA and a \$250 gift certificate from Vantage Apparel (asi/93390).



FIRST RUNNER-UP:

Visual Impressions received a two-year subscription to Embroidery i2, a plugin for Adobe Illustrator or CorelDRAW, sponsored by Pulse Microsystems and valued at \$5,000. Also included is a \$100 gift certificate from Madeira USA and a \$250 gift certificate from Callaway, Perry Ellis International (asi/77715).

SECOND RUNNER-UP:

J&K Embroidery Plus received a two-year subscription to Embroidery i2, sponsored by Pulse Microsystems and valued at \$5,000, and a \$100 gift certificate from Madeira USA.

HONORABLE MENTIONS:

The two teams received one-year decorator memberships to ASI.

MEET THE JUDGES

FIRST-ROUND JUDGES:



CONRAD BOOKER
designer/artist,
Philadelphia



GINNY FINEBERG
owner,
Sandpiper Embroidery,
Wildwood Crest, NJ



GERI FINIO
owner,
Studio 187,
Anne Arundel County, MD



LIZ HATHAWAY
creative manager,
Penn Emblem Co. (asi/77120),
Philadelphia



LEE ROMANO SEQUEIRA
co-owner,
Sparkle Plenty Designs
(asi/88442),
Philadelphia

SECOND-ROUND JUDGES:



ERICH CAMPBELL
digitizer/e-commerce manager,
Black Duck Inc. (asi/140730),
Albuquerque, NM



JAY FISHMAN
owner,
Wicked Stitch of the East,
Cleveland



BONNIE LANDSBERGER
owner,
Moonlight Design,
Cannon Falls, MN



KATHRYN OSTRANDER
digitizer,
Sandpiper Embroidery,
Wildwood Crest, NJ

The Shop:

**VISUAL
IMPRESSIONS**

MILWAUKEE, WI

Artist: ANN MARIE FINNESSY
Digitizer: BOB LOMPA
Embroiderer: KAREN GILLIS

Visual Impressions dazzled the judges with the artistically deployed metallic thread and skillfully rendered 3-D puff of the dragonfly logo. Questionable unisex appeal and minor finishing issues kept this whimsical entry from taking the top spot.

The Solution:

TOOLS OF THE TRADE: The artwork was digitized using Wilcom software and sewn out on a Barudan machine using Robison-Anton thread.

POLO: The EZCotton Piqué Polo Shirt (men's K800, ladies' L800) from SanMar (asi/84863) features a left-chest design with 5,522 stitches and eight colors. The shoulder design has 2,407 stitches and one color, and the back artwork consists of 5,570 stitches and nine colors.

CAP: The hat (AH70) from SanMar has artwork with 3,395 stitches and seven colors on the front and a design with 1,820 stitches and one color on the back.

APRON: The 65% polyester and 35% cotton apron (F10) from Chef Works sports artwork with 8,863 stitches and nine colors.

Original Artwork:

Visual Impressions created a sparkling dragonfly logo, with vibrant purple and green wings. Embroidered swirls over the shoulder mimic the insect's flight path. The artwork was meant to evoke a natural feeling



BACK OF SHIRT
DETAIL

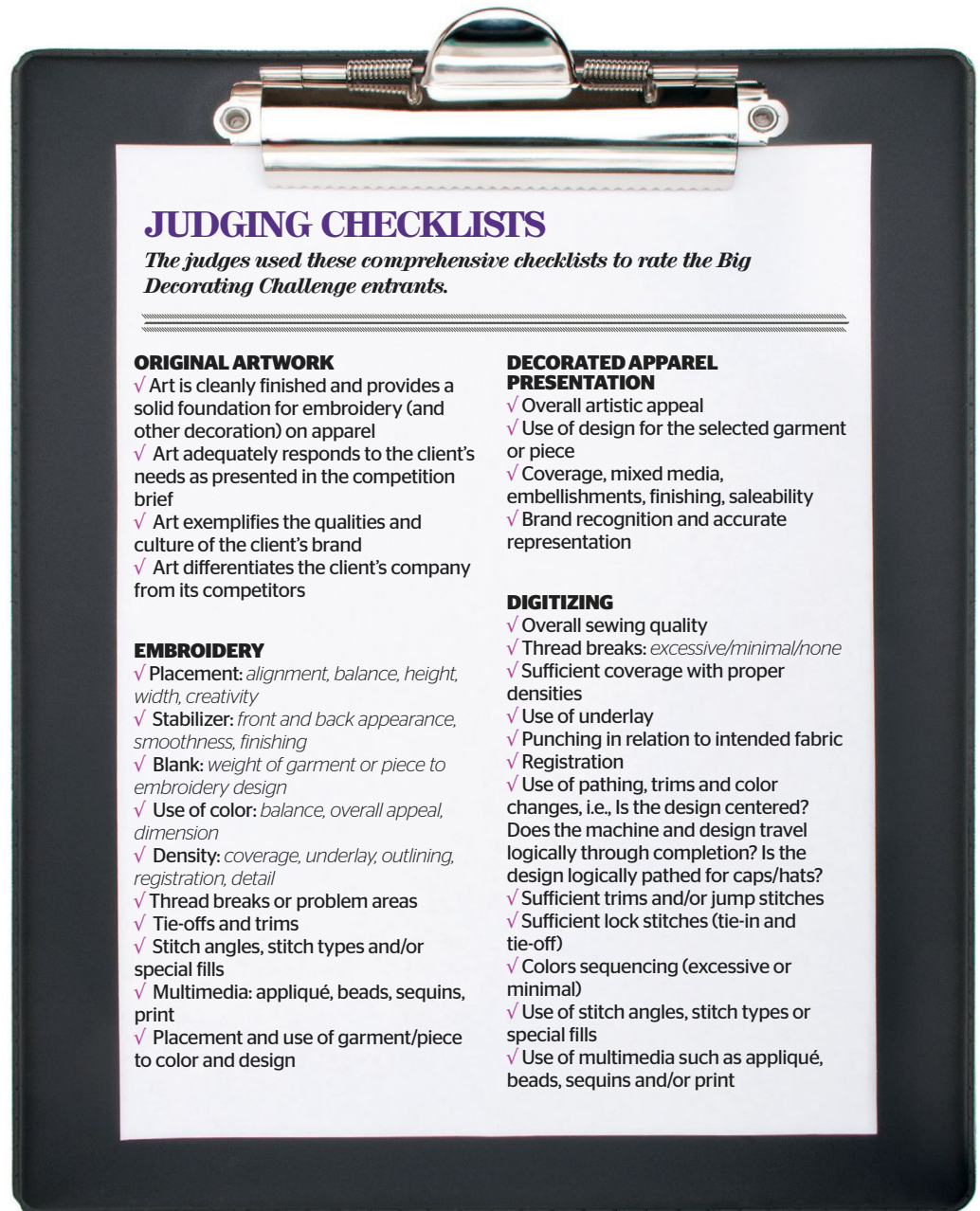
without being conventional. “Using the dragonfly allowed us to show off our embroidery skills, but also add some fun,” says Marshall Atkinson, chief operating officer of Visual Impressions. “We felt if we did something different, like sewing up over the shoulder, our concept would stand out from the crowd.” The judges appreciated the creativity, calling the dragonfly a welcome pop of color. “The shoulder swirl is brilliant,” Finio says, adding that the artwork was fun. However, the judges noted the design was feminine and questioned its unisex appeal, noting that decorators and artists should consider this when designing a logo.

Embroidery:

Visual Impressions broke out the special effects to make the entry stand out, employing metallic thread, puff foam and other techniques. Judge Finio says she loved the 3-D effect on the dragonfly. The judges also lauded the density of the embroidery, giving it marks for excellence. Two areas of concern: The company name could have been enlarged and made more prominent on the cap, and the stabilizer used on the shirt might be uncomfortable against the wearer’s skin.

Decorated Apparel Presentation:

The Visual Impressions team wanted a “bright, vibrant and fresh feel” and used a palette of yellow and green as a starting point, Atkinson says. “From there, we researched what styles and brands were available. We brought in



JUDGING CHECKLISTS

The judges used these comprehensive checklists to rate the Big Decorating Challenge entrants.

ORIGINAL ARTWORK

- ✓ Art is cleanly finished and provides a solid foundation for embroidery (and other decoration) on apparel
- ✓ Art adequately responds to the client’s needs as presented in the competition brief
- ✓ Art exemplifies the qualities and culture of the client’s brand
- ✓ Art differentiates the client’s company from its competitors

EMBROIDERY

- ✓ **Placement:** alignment, balance, height, width, creativity
- ✓ **Stabilizer:** front and back appearance, smoothness, finishing
- ✓ **Blank:** weight of garment or piece to embroidery design
- ✓ **Use of color:** balance, overall appeal, dimension
- ✓ **Density:** coverage, underlay, outlining, registration, detail
- ✓ **Thread breaks or problem areas**
- ✓ **Tie-offs and trims**
- ✓ **Stitch angles, stitch types and/or special fills**
- ✓ **Multimedia:** appliqué, beads, sequins, print
- ✓ **Placement and use of garment/piece to color and design**

DECORATED APPAREL PRESENTATION

- ✓ Overall artistic appeal
- ✓ Use of design for the selected garment or piece
- ✓ Coverage, mixed media, embellishments, finishing, saleability
- ✓ Brand recognition and accurate representation

DIGITIZING

- ✓ Overall sewing quality
- ✓ **Thread breaks:** excessive/minimal/none
- ✓ **Sufficient coverage with proper densities**
- ✓ **Use of underlay**
- ✓ **Punching** in relation to intended fabric
- ✓ **Registration**
- ✓ **Use of pathing, trims and color changes, i.e., Is the design centered? Does the machine and design travel logically through completion? Is the design logically pathed for caps/hats?**
- ✓ **Sufficient trims and/or jump stitches**
- ✓ **Sufficient lock stitches (tie-in and tie-off)**
- ✓ **Colors sequencing (excessive or minimal)**
- ✓ **Use of stitch angles, stitch types or special fills**
- ✓ **Use of multimedia such as appliqué, beads, sequins and/or print**

stock and matched things up in-house, eliminating the choices once we had them in our hands.” Atkinson stresses that good apparel solutions are half design and half garment choice: “To some degree, most designers forget how the piece will sew on the garment, and what thread colors will look like on each piece. There has to be discussion about the look

as a unit, but also how it will be produced for the individual item. There’s give and take.”

Digitizing:

Judge Bonnie Landsberger, owner of Moonlight Design, had high praise for Visual Impressions’ efforts, calling the three garments a “joy to test-sew.” She was impressed by the small lettering on the back of

the cap. “It’s not easy to achieve clarity in small letters and takes careful digitizing and editing to get it right.” The blending on the dragonfly’s wings and the 3-D puff on the body were also skillfully rendered, she says. The digitizing followed all the rules, with a smooth stitch-out. “These three entries could not be more perfect,” Landsberger says.

The Shop:

**J&K
EMBROIDERY
PLUS**

COLUMBIA, PA



*Artist and
Embroiderer:*
JACQUELINE COOPER

Digitizer:
**QUALITY PUNCH,
TACOMA, WA**

The look J&K Embroidery Plus created was clean, cohesive and understated. The logo, however, was slightly flat and lacking in vitality – adding stitch variety would have elevated the entry.

The Solution:

TOOLS OF THE TRADE: The artwork was digitized using Wilcom and Pulse Microsystems software and stitched on a Tajima TEHX-C1501 machine, using Madeira USA and Robison-Anton 40-weight rayon thread.

POLO: The Silk Touch Polo (men's K500, ladies' L500) from SanMar (asi/84863) has a left-chest logo of 8,754 stitches and three colors. The Web address on the sleeve has 2,480 stitches and one color, and the tree on the back of the neck has 929 stitches.

CAP: The Brushed Twill Low-Profile Cap (CP77) from SanMar has a front logo with 5,483 stitches and three colors. The Web address on the back has 2,952 stitches and one color.

APRON: The Port Authority Medium-Length Apron (A510) from SanMar features artwork with 6,828 stitches in three colors.

Original Artwork:

Jacqueline Cooper, owner and embroiderer at J&K Embroidery Plus, placed the word

“Graham’s” above a stitched line and “Greenery” below, freeing up space on the ends for themed graphics. “I made a few sketches of leaves and trees, and put them in the spaces created,” she explains. “The line represents the landscape, the tree the nursery and the leaf the garden aspect of the business.” The judges appreciated the consistency and professional logo design, and the extra touches, like Cooper separating out parts of the logo and adding them to unexpected spots – like the tiny tree growing on the shirt yoke.

Embroidery:

Cooper kept her logo design crisp, simple and ideal for embroidery. However, the judges had concerns about the

small lettering, like the Web address on the sleeve and cap. “I’m not a fan of small Web addresses on sleeves,” says Ginny Fineberg, owner of Sandpiper Embroidery. “Customers rarely copy it down from there.” The embroidery also had some issues with finishing: “The back should always be cleaned of threads,” Finio says.

Decorated Apparel Presentation:

The butter yellow and olive green color scheme looks fresh, evoking the idea of a nursery without devolving into cliché. The uniformity of design across all three garments made this a stand-out entry for judge Lee Romano Sequeira, co-owner

of Sparkle Plenty Designs (asi/88442): “It’s a clean, consistent logo design.”

Digitizing:

Cooper partnered with Quality Punch, whose staff digitized the artwork that Cooper stitched onto the polo’s left chest and the cap’s crown, and then enlarged for the apron. Judge Jay Fishman, owner of Wicked Stitch of the East, lauded the digitizing: “Everything registers, the pathing is correct with sufficient trims and color sequencing.” But, he adds, to combat design flatness, “The leaves could have been done in a split satin or loose fill for additional texturing,” he says.



The Shop:

**AzCa
EMBROIDERY
& SCREEN
PRINTING**

(ASI/701972), TEMPE, AZ



Artist:
**JENNIFER
LAMOREAUX**



**Digitizer and
Embroiderer:**
NATHAN MILHOAN

AzCa Embroidery (asi/701972) wowed the judges with smart apparel choices and clever design touches. Some digitizing problems left the embroidery susceptible to snags, and the decorator open to customer complaints.

The Solution:

TOOLS OF THE TRADE: The artwork was digitized with Wilcom Embroidery Studio and stitched out with Robison-Anton 40-weight thread on a Tajima machine.

POLO: The Tech Piqué Polo Shirt (K527) from SanMar (asi/84863) features a logo with 5,573 stitches and three colors.

CAP: This six-panel, low-profile cap with elongated bill and neck cape (EOM101) from alphabroder (asi/34063) features 5,573 stitches and three colors. The neck cape also boasts a colorful direct-to-garment garden motif.

APRON: The Port Authority Medium Length Apron (A510) from SanMar features artwork with 8,253 stitches and three colors.

Original Artwork:

The AzCa Embroidery team's ideas revolved around plant life, transforming the "Y" in "Greenery" into a swooping stem that ends in two leaves. One of the leaves replaces the

apostrophe in "Graham's." The leaf motif was repeated on the pocket of the apron. "It was important to me that the type of business was obvious at first glance," says Jennifer Lamoreaux, graphic artist at AzCa Embroidery. "Also, simplicity is key. Too many times we see complicated logos that just don't work on apparel." The judges thought turning the apostrophe into one of the leaves was a nice touch, and the leaves sprouting from the apron pocket were endearing, furthering an overall cheerful design aesthetic. "The logo is very clean and the graphics are good," says Judge Ginny Fineberg, owner of Sandpiper Embroidery.

Embroidery:

The judges liked the multimedia treatment on the cap: traditional embroidery on the body of the hat and a flower garden motif digitally printed on the neck cape. Several judges had concerns about the width of the stitches in the leaves's satin columns. The fact that the leaves on the apron pocket didn't line up with those above the pocket worried Fineberg. "That portion should have been redone or just have been done as a pocket topper," she says.

continued on pg. 53



**BACK OF HAT
DETAIL**

The Shop:

**A.D.E. &
CONSULTING
LLC**

CENTENNIAL, CO



**Artist and
Digitizer:
JORGE YADID**



**Embroiderer:
ANA P. CONSTANZA
AND JORGE YADID**

A.D.E. displayed creative thinking and strong technical skills, but the logo was busy, using too many techniques and ideas. The identical deep green of the apparel could also be too uniform.

The Solution:

TOOLS OF THE TRADE: The artwork was digitized on Wilcom E3 software and stitched out using Madeira 40-weight polyester thread on a Melco XTS machine.

POLO: The polo (5095) from alphabroder (asi/34063) features a left-chest logo with 10,744 stitches in seven colors.

CAP: The hat (6204), also from alphabroder, has a design with 9,958 stitches in seven colors on the crown and a Web address on the back with 2,573 stitches in one color.

APRON: The alphabroder apron (4350) has artwork with 13,466 stitches in seven colors.

Original Artwork:

Jorge Yadid, owner of A.D.E. & Consulting, says the basis of the design was the font, chosen for its naturalistic look, particularly the end of the “G” in both “Graham’s” and “Greenery,” which resembles a leaf. “I started manipulating the ‘G’ and ended up interlocking them, which evoked plants’ growth process,” Yadid says. “One ‘G’ represents the water

and the other the growth. The water leads to growth, and it’s a continuous process. It shows Graham’s Greenery makes it happen.” Judges liked the creativity of the leaf in the letter “G,” the arc of the water and the logo’s textured branch, but said the overall effect was busy.

Embroidery:

Yadid says he adjusted the logo’s size, as well as customizing the design, pull compensation and density for each garment. Judge Finio appreciated the stabilizing cover and the embroidery techniques used in the design. “The blending in the drop

and the texture on the branch are both well done,” she says. However, Finio points out, the two “E’s” in “Greenery” on the shirt were too close together.

Decorated Apparel Presentation:

The judges liked the environmentally conscious look of the logo, which evokes the idea of conservation and the growth cycle. Not so subtle was the bright, uniform green of the apparel, which the judges found a little loud. “I wish the garments were different shades,” Judge Romano says.

Digitizing:

A.D.E. & Consulting used satin letters, a regular fill stitch for the leaves and a program fill stitch for the center branch to give it realistic texture. The decorator used a blending stitch for the water drop. Judge Fishman was impressed with the digitizing, calling the program split for the branch creative. Color changes, registration, pathing and trims were well done. The drop’s level of detail and shading would work better for a larger image. “Less detail would draw the eye to the logo’s overall creativity,” he adds.



continued from pg.51

Decorated Apparel Presentation:

The AzCa team put thought into how its apparel choices would benefit a person who works indoors and out. “All the items are soil/stain resistant so employees, while working in the dirt most of the day, still looked professional,” says Jeanette Noiles of AzCa. The uniform also provides protection from the sun; the hat and shirt have a UPF of at least 40, and the polo boasts moisture-wicking technology. The judges liked the cap’s elongated bill and sun-shading neck cape.

Digitizing:

Judge Kathryn Ostrander, digitizer at Sandpiper Embroidery, loved the look of the pocket and hat design, praising the block sequencing, but she had concerns about the sequencing of the lettering. She recommends changing “Graham’s” to run “center out,” as “Greenery” was programmed to do. “This prevents the hat and fine knits from puckering,” she says. She echoed the first-round judges’ worries about the width of the satin stitches on the leaves. The pocket leaves, with stitches 17mm wide, wouldn’t sew out on Sandpiper’s machines, even with jump stitches. The wide stitches are especially vulnerable to snags. “The customer likely would return the garments,” Ostrander says. “This is a digitizing flaw.” She suggests a long, split-stitch satin column, which would look the same but be sturdier.

CREATE AN APPAREL SOLUTION

Here are some tips to help you position yourself as an apparel expert and branding guru, like the winners and finalists in our Big Decorating Challenge.

1. INTERVIEW YOUR CLIENT.

This is arguably the most important step. Do some basic research, and then sit down with your clients to find out their specific needs and corporate culture. The more you know about them, the easier it will be to design a solution they’ll love.

Tip: “YOU NEED TO GET AN IDEA OF WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THE COMPANY IS ABOUT, WHAT’S IMPORTANT TO THEM,” SAYS ERICH CAMPBELL, DIGITIZER/E-COMMERCE MANAGER AT BLACK DUCK INC.

2. CHOOSE THE RIGHT APPAREL.

Work with your supplier to choose “good, better, best” options to pitch to the client. Remember to include male and female versions of uniforms. Provide choices appropriate to every season, and tailor the apparel to the climate in which it will be worn. Bankers in Arizona probably don’t need fleece jackets, for example. Consider carefully how sturdy an item needs to be, or whether performance features like moisture-wicking would be useful additions.

Tip: “THE BEST APPROACH FROM A BRANDING PERSPECTIVE IS TO TRY TO THINK ABOUT THE APPAREL AND THE DECORATION TOGETHER. THEY’RE EQUALLY IMPORTANT,” SAYS GINA BARRECA, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AT VANTAGE APPAREL (ASI/93390). “IF YOU JUST THINK ABOUT APPAREL AND TRY TO THINK ABOUT DECORATION LATER, YOU MAY NOT GET THE RESULTS YOU WANT.”

3. CREATE THE LOGO.

Work with a graphic designer to create a logo that’s a visual representation of the company’s values. Think strategically about color choice, sizing and placement. Remember: You’re in the business of branding, not replicating a business card.

Tip: “BRANDING IS SOMETHING THAT CREATES CONVERSATIONS,” SAYS JAY FISHMAN, OWNER OF WICKED STITCH OF THE EAST. “YOU DON’T NEED A PHONE NUMBER, FAX NUMBER, WEBSITE, ALL THAT STUFF ON A HAT. PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BE LOOKING AT THAT EMBROIDERY MINIMALLY FROM 4 FEET AWAY. LET THEM ASK ABOUT THE LOGO. THAT’S WHAT BRANDING IS ALL ABOUT.”

4. THINK HOLISTICALLY.

Make sure you choose a decorating technique that will work well with the garment you’re using. Think also about the image your client wants to present. For example, if the client is traditional and high-end, perhaps steer them away from screen-printed T-shirts and suggest an embroidered polo instead. Make sure that every piece is part of a unified whole.

Tip: “SOMETIMES CUSTOMERS COME TO ME WANTING TO CHANGE THE COLORS OF THE LOGO ON A UNIFORM, BUT IT’S IMPORTANT TO KEEP EVERYTHING COORDINATED,” SAYS JACQUELINE COOPER, OWNER OF J&K EMBROIDERY PLUS.

5. BE CREATIVE.

You don’t have to merely replicate the logo on every garment you decorate. Find out whether your client is receptive to mixed media or unusual design placements – touches that may elevate the brand without muddying the presentation.

Tip: “LITTLE NUANCES, LIKE ADDING A LASER DESIGN TO A COLLAR OR PLACKET, SET A BRAND APART,” SAYS STEVE KANNEY, PRESIDENT AND OWNER OF TARGET DECORATED APPAREL (ASI/90549). “IT DOESN’T HAVE TO BE IN-YOUR-FACE. I’M NOT TALKING ABOUT MAKING IT LOOK LIKE A NASCAR SHIRT. BUT THOSE LITTLE THINGS GO A LONG WAY.”

6. UPSELL.

Now that you’ve designed an apparel solution for your client, think about how else you can meet the company’s needs. Does the client plan to sell branded apparel to the general public? Come up with stylish retail looks to pitch to your client. Remember, the garments should evoke the feeling of the brand, but to avoid confusion, they shouldn’t be duplicates of employee uniforms.

Tip: “IT REALLY HELPS IF YOU CAN GET THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THEIR TARGET AUDIENCE,” CAMPBELL SAYS. “THE OTHER DAY I WAS IN A MEETING WITH A NATIONAL PARK. TURNS OUT, THEY HAVE A BIG EVENT COMING UP AND MOST OF THE PEOPLE ARE SENIOR CITIZENS. THEY WON’T SELL PULLOVER SWEATSHIRTS BECAUSE OLDER PEOPLE HAVE TROUBLE PUTTING THEM ON. WE WENT WITH A ZIP HOODIE INSTEAD.”

7. GET ONLINE.

Consider setting up an online company store for the client so workers are empowered to order the apparel that works best for them whenever they might need it. It’s a good way to ensure repeat business. Plus, putting together an e-commerce solution is another avenue where you can help to reinforce the client’s branding.

Tip: “CORPORATE PEOPLE DON’T REALLY WANT YOU TO CUSTOMIZE EVERYTHING,” CAMPBELL SAYS. “MOST PEOPLE WANT TO GET ON, GRAB THEIR UNIFORMS AND GO... NEVER MAKE IT HARD FOR THEM TO ORDER OR HARD TO PAY.”

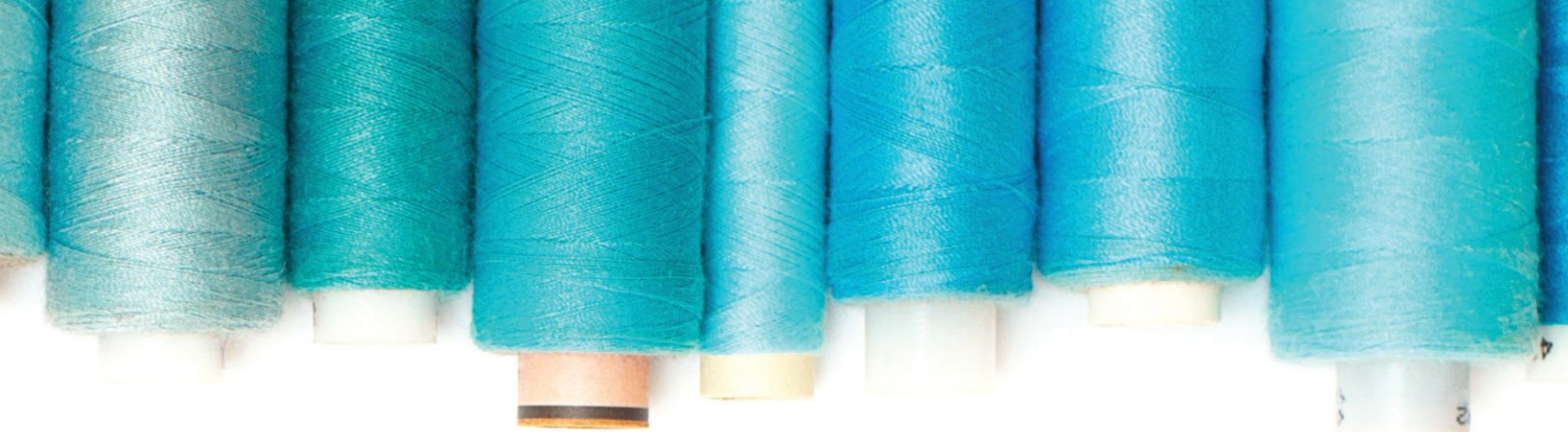


MENDING THE APPAREL TRADE

It's been a year and a half since a factory collapse in Bangladesh killed more than 1,120 people, most of them garment workers. Some in the industry believe this preventable tragedy was the wakeup call needed to usher in an era of ethical sourcing, but they say there's still a lot of work to be done in Bangladesh - and the rest of the world.

By Theresa Hegel





Apparel maker David Bebon has been involved in Bangladesh's garment industry since the late 1980s – back when the country's nascent cut-and-sew trade was, as he says, “pretty much the Wild West.” He remembers inspecting factories with his father and seeing fire escapes dangling dangerously from the outer walls of buildings, threatening to buckle under the slightest of weights. One factory they walked through had designated an internal stairway as its “fire escape.” The owner didn't understand at first why Bebon's father thought that wasn't such a good idea.

To Bebon, CEO of 5-year-old DBEBZ Apparel, those anecdotes are not about pointing the finger at a country that's had long-standing compliance problems. Instead, they're object lessons in why it's important for apparel suppliers to take an active role in ensuring their garments are being made in safe and socially conscious facilities. “My personal feeling is we need to take a responsible stance in the entire supply chain,” he says.

Last April, a deadly building collapse

in Bangladesh sparked a global outcry at the lack of oversight, dangerous conditions and disregard for workers' health and safety in the country's \$23 billion garment industry, which employs more than 4 million. But, experts warn, it's a mistake to think this is just Bangladesh's issue. Instead, they say, it's indicative of our “fast fashion” culture that expects \$10 T-shirts, no matter what, and an apparel industry always on the hunt for ever-cheaper labor to accommodate those demands. Bebon doesn't mince words: “We're used to the only product in the world that has gone down in price in 20 years. ... The evolution of apparel manufacturing has always been and always will be to the lowest-cost place. ... It's just the way the industry works.” But, he adds, that doesn't mean we should accept the loss of human lives as merely the cost of doing business.

The Aftermath of Rana Plaza

The Rana Plaza, built on swampy land outside Dhaka, was an eight-story building that was only approved to be five stories high. It collapsed last year, killing more than 1,120 people and injur-

ing more than 2,500. Considered the deadliest accident in the world's garment industry, it came just four months after a fire at the Tazreen Fashions factory in Dhaka killed 112 workers. A number of U.S. and European brands, including Wal-Mart, Sears and Benetton, were linked to the factories.

In the months that followed the Rana Plaza collapse, retailers formed two groups to inspect and improve factories in Bangladesh. The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh – composed of more than 150 apparel brands, mostly European – vowed to inspect about 50 factories a week. As of August, representatives say they've inspected more than 1,000 factories, publishing more than 150 corrective action plans online.

Wal-Mart and Gap were among the two dozen American and Canadian brands that created the separate Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, which had a goal of inspecting nearly 600 factories. In May, the Alliance announced it had completed the first round of inspections, identifying problems such as poor wiring, lack of fire escapes and overloaded buildings.





More than 1,120 people, mostly garment workers, were killed in April 2013, after the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh collapsed.

Throughout the process, the two groups have butted heads with the Bangladeshi government, resistant factory owners and each other. “The Accord and Alliance are using the same tools, but they’re approaching the results differently,” says D. Fenton, executive director of the Quality Certification Alliance, a nonprofit group that helps promotional product suppliers provide safe and compliant products. They’ve “defined the issue differently, [so] it’s really hard to get a consistent set of directions out of that. We do know they’re raising the bar because they’re all attacking the problem,” she adds.

In August, the Accord decided to re-inspect the 300 or so factories used by both Alliance and Accord members, citing concerns that the Alliance’s inspections wouldn’t meet the Accord’s standards. In a statement on its website, Ellen Tauscher, Alliance chairwoman, called the Accord’s actions “a setback for garment safety efforts in Bangladesh.” The move also angered the country’s garment manufacturers, who have shut down nearly two dozen factories deemed

unsafe by the groups. Shahidullah Azim, vice president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, tells India’s *Business Standard* that the dispute has “hampered factory production and increased [the] cost of safety upgrades.” He also expressed confusion over which inspection report a factory is supposed to follow.

Despite the recent disagreements, many industry experts say the inspections are a good start, but, they stress, they’re only a start. The more difficult part is actually fixing all the safety issues uncovered during the walkthroughs, a point underlined by recent fires at two Accord-inspected factories. In late August, a fire at Cordial Design Ltd. in Mirpur, Dhaka injured five factory workers; the fire started in a detached storage facility the owners didn’t reveal to Accord engineers. In September, a fire at Mega Dyeing Ltd. in Gazipur left one worker dead and five others injured.

It’s also important to note that the Alliance and Accord have been monitoring only a fraction of the manufacturers in the country: “We’ve got [about]

5,000 factories in Bangladesh,” Bebon says. “My personal opinion: I bet 2,000 of them you could close tomorrow. ... That’s good. Let them go away. ... They need to clean up their act or go bye-bye.”

Around 218 garment factories have been closed in the year and half since the Rana Plaza tragedy, including the 20 or so recommended by the Accord and Alliance, according to Azim of the BGMEA.

Another point to consider: Though Bangladesh’s garment industry continues to grow, China still dominates the garment industry, and there are plenty of other countries with a cheap and abundant workforce gaining traction in the cut-and-sew trade. Why haven’t retailers embraced Accord or Alliance-style models to oversee their other factories around the world, asks Amrou Awaysheh, an assistant professor who studies supply chain and corporate social responsibility at Indiana University’s Kelley School of Business. The answer, he says, is that there haven’t been enough consumers demanding change yet. “If you were to ask anybody now, ‘Do you remember the Rana disaster?’ most people will probably say no. ... Unfortunately, the only time things will change is when another disaster happens, and it’s on the news. ... It will take something bad to happen in Malaysia for retailers to say, ‘Let’s do an alliance there,’” Awaysheh says.

Untangling the Supply Chain

Awaysheh believes the key to widespread substantive changes in global manufacturing is transparency throughout the supply chain. The rise of social media and viral video sharing has helped tremendously. “Five to 10 years ago the average person wouldn’t know what a supply chain is,” he says. “Now they realize things don’t magically appear on the shelf.”

Suppliers have traditionally been reluctant to reveal too much about sourcing strategies, often worried about losing a competitive advantage. That attitude has been changing, with many

companies publishing a corporate social responsibility policy online and including at least a few particulars about where garments are made. Swiss apparel brand Switcher goes further than most. Eight years ago, the company began to include a “DNA code” on each garment, which buyers can enter into the website *Respect-code.org* to find detailed information on every step of the supply chain, from where the cotton was picked, spun and dyed, to how the finished garment was distributed, according to Switcher executive Gilles Dana. Most important, he says, is information on the certifications and audits of each facility involved in the apparel-making process.

“You can’t be sustainable if you only know something was ‘Made in Portugal,’” Dana says. “A T-shirt isn’t produced in only one factory. There are six to 10 steps. It’s too easy to say a factory is nice and clean, but maybe behind that step in the supply chain, there are very bad social or environmental conditions.”

Switcher has even invited some clients to tour the factories it uses, unafraid that this could lead a client to buy directly from that facility, instead of from Switcher. “We decided years and years ago to be transparent,” Dana says. “We won’t hide the truth. We don’t fear being copied, but open all the doors.” Corporate buyers, he adds, are willing to pay a little extra for the security a coded garment brings.

Even if a brand isn’t willing to go the Switcher route, its supply chain should at least be clear to its own executives. Retailers like Wal-Mart and Sears that were connected to the Tazreen factory claimed suppliers had subcontracted there without their knowledge. To Bebon, such a shady supply chain is unacceptable. “If you don’t know your product is in a factory, you don’t deserve my business,” he says. “You’ve got to know, and if you don’t know, then you shouldn’t be making shirts. You have to be responsible for your production. ... You place a 40,000-dozen order with a

factory, and you never looked at it?”

Georgeta Navodarszky, director of global sourcing at alphabroder/Ash City (asi/34063), agrees. “I have no idea how a sourcing executive would be able to allocate business without knowing the factory, or getting in close touch with the company owners. You can’t have other people do the diligence work,” she says. “There’s no factory that gets our business without us being there, auditing, getting the reference and doing the first trial order just to make sure that everything works fine.”

Independent Auditing

Brands that don’t regularly visit their factories should use respected agents and insist on facilities that have undergone independent third-party auditing and have the certifications to prove it. The CEO of one of the most well-known groups, Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production (WRAP), says he’s seen an increase in requests for certification since the Rana Plaza disaster.

“With very few exceptions, you can’t expect these brands to be able to have their own set of eyeballs in each factory. It’s not resource-efficient because supply chains are very widespread,” says Avedis Seferian, CEO and president of WRAP. “You also want to make sure you have an independent verifier. There is, on the surface at least, a potential conflict because you have a vested interest in passing the factory because your product will be made in it. ... We have no dog in the fight.”

Critics of factory auditing, however, point to situations like the 2012 fire at the Ali Enterprises Factory in Karachi, Pakistan. More than 260 textile workers died, trapped by barred windows and locked exits. Just weeks before the blaze, a respected factory monitoring group, Social Accountability International, gave the facility a prestigious SA8000 certification, saying it had met standards in areas including minimum wages, child labor and health and safety.

COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

Here are some things a decorator can ask from a supplier to help indicate whether the vendor is making a valid effort to ensure it uses safe facilities where labor abuses don’t occur.

COMPLIANCE QUESTIONNAIRES AND AUDIT REPORTS:

Develop a basic, multi-section form to get a snapshot of a supplier’s internal policies and procedures related to social compliance. Check answers against the company’s audit reports to make sure everything lines up.

CORPORATE CODE OF CONDUCT:

Conduct codes establish a supplier’s baseline of expectations for compliance in social responsibility. alphabroder/Ash City (asi/34063), for example, has a detailed code of conduct that it updates annually. The code is posted on its website and translated in more than 10 languages to ensure it is “communicated, understood, implemented and followed,” says Georgeta Navodarszky, director of global sourcing. “It’s not just a message or in a memo. We’re measuring results and following up regularly, and we work closely with our factories to monitor any improvements that may be required.”

CERTIFICATIONS AND ACCREDITATIONS:

There are a number of organizations that offer certifications and accreditations to help protect factory workers around the world. Ask a supplier if its compliance program is accredited by the Fair Labor Association. Does the supplier have WRAP certification? What about accreditation by the Quality Certification Alliance, an independent accreditation organization specific to the ad specialty industry?

“It’s a cat and mouse game,” Awaysheh says. He gives a hypothetical, but often all-too-real example of a factory that keeps its fire escape chained to prevent workers from taking breaks. When an auditor is expected, “The owner unchains the fire escape, makes sure all the workers understand that, if asked, they say they have time off, take breaks and wear protective clothing. The inspector walks through and says it’s safe. You have hundreds of factories to inspect, so you move on. What do you think the owner does when the inspector leaves?”

Seferian agrees that WRAP and other auditing shouldn’t be done in a “gotcha environment.” It’s less about checking items off a list, and more about ensuring systems are in place to handle emergencies and educating manufacturers on their responsibilities, he says. “It’s not enough to just look around and see fire alarms, extinguishers and escapes. The real questions are: Are these exits always kept open? Are workers properly trained in knowing how to use them? Is there someone whose job it is to inspect those extinguishers?”

Like the Alliance and Accord, independent factory auditing is a positive first step in ensuring ethical sourcing. “You can knock WRAP all day long, but it’s something. It’s sending people in,” says Bebon. “We need more WRAP-certified factories, specifically in Bangladesh, Cambodia, China and Vietnam. There are many factories that would not pass WRAP, but they’re there doing business.”

Benefits of Collaboration

Something that should help dissipate the adversarial “cat-and-mouse” relationship between many suppliers and their overseas factories is to move away from a system of merely monitoring factory conditions, and toward one of collaboration among all parties, Awaysheh says. Think of monitoring as the stick rather than the carrot, with brands using the threat of pulling their business to force a

TOP APPAREL EXPORTERS IN 2013



factory to reform, he says.

Instead, suppliers and manufacturers would be better off working together to improve conditions. It’s about forming a relationship and building trust. A collaborative supplier might invest money in the factory, specifically to purchase protective equipment for workers – a move that would make employees safer and more productive and perhaps inspire the factory owner to invest more of his or her own money. “It’s a win-win-win across the board,” Awaysheh says. The catch? To work, collaboration requires a long-term view, and most brands are too focused on short-term goals to invest the necessary time and money on one particular factory, he says.

Still, more and more suppliers are seeing the benefits of a collaborative model. Fruit of the Loom (asi/84257), for example, received the 2013 Secretary of State’s Award for Corporate Excellence for a factory it opened in Honduras more than 20 years ago. “We’ve forged a ground-breaking collective bargaining agreement with

the workers, and we recognize unions and have adopted a union-neutral policy at all of our assembly facilities in Honduras,” says Rick Medlin, president and CEO. The company has also provided more than 10,000 health screenings for the local Honduran community.

Last year, Boxercraft (asi/41325) started using Haiti-based factory Industrial Revolution II to manufacture 80% of its tops, with plans to increase overall orders in the future. The factory, backed by designer Donna Karan and actor Matt Damon, promises to train unemployed Haitians, pay them more than the minimum wage and donate half its profits to social programs. “This was the right thing to do,” says Shelley Foland, CEO.

The Good and the Bad

Though Bangladesh’s garment sector has become the poster child for labor abuses and industrial negligence, it’s not so simple as to write off an entire country as a bad place to do business. Experts say that’s the wrong message to take away.

There are many well-run and regulated factories in Bangladesh, with several manufacturers investing significant funds to build “green” factories that reduce water, energy and chemical consumption. “We’ve seen a lot of improvements in Bangladesh,” says Navodarszky

of alphabroder/Ash City. “Unfortunately, some of the individuals and media in the industry may only focus on the exceptions and tragedy. We have to spread the good news as well, so at least customers gain more confidence in knowing that continuous improvements take place in

most of the reputable factories.”

And there are many bad factories in countries other than Bangladesh, even in locations you might not expect, such as Europe and the U.S. Earlier this year, the Clean Clothes Campaign, a European group dedicated to improving conditions for global garment workers, released a study that uncovered poor conditions and poverty wages in many Eastern European clothing factories. According to the report, a group of Turkish workers admitted that they had to sign a clause not to get pregnant for five years in order to get jobs as garment workers. Other interviewed workers said they were unable to take days off from work or earn sick leave, and many mentioned being forced to work overtime, clocking 200 hours a month or more. “We expect garment workers in Asia are being exploited with low wages and poor working conditions, but what this report shows is that there are no good guys,” says Bettina Musiolek, a co-author of the Clean Clothes Campaign’s *Stitched Up* report.

The “silver lining in the very dark cloud” of the Rana Plaza tragedy, says Seferian of WRAP, is that it has raised the profile of socially responsible business practices in the industry. “We’re now in an environment where this is as much a part of the production process as checking for quality of the product,” he says. “It’s not an add-on or a niche. It’s part and parcel of doing business.”

The important thing, Bebon notes, is not to abandon Bangladesh, but to engage with the government and factory owners to continue to bring about change. If that means the price of a T-shirt has to go up by a dollar, he thinks it would be money well spent. “I believe the American consumer can afford that,” Bebon says. “We can’t let people die from making shirts.”

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

SOURCING TRENDS

The Rana Plaza tragedy and other deadly - and preventable - accidents have led many in the garment industry to reevaluate their supply chains. “Recent events have made it clear to the brands that it might not be the wisest thing to have this ridiculously spread out supply chain,” says Avedis Seferian, CEO and president of WRAP. “Overall, most brands are trying to work with fewer, more trusted factories, rather than a large number of factories they just churn through routinely.”

CHINA PLUS ONE:

One trend Seferian has noticed is consolidation. China is still the No. 1 exporter of apparel, with many brands firmly entrenched there, but companies want to spread their risk, so a common strategy is to source in China plus one or two other countries, Seferian says.

NEAR SOURCING:

Many apparel companies are seeing the value in moving operations closer to home, particularly to Mexico. Source One Management Services, a strategic sourcing consultant based outside of Philadelphia, has noticed a dramatic increase in companies wanting to return to the Western hemisphere in the last year and a half. Being closer to home makes it easier for brands to oversee their supply chain; plus, apparel companies are more nimble at responding to fashion trends, able to increase production of popular styles in a matter of days, rather than the weeks it may take to make changes in Asia, says Diego de la Garcia, a senior project manager. It’s also a good region when it comes to social compliance, he says. “The trend in Latin America and Mexico is to push for certifications in every aspect, from environmental processes to labor quality and safety,” he says. “It’s one of the things that they’re using to market themselves.”

EMERGING MARKETS:

As China and Bangladesh and other countries with established garment industries become more expensive, brands are seeking out lower-cost alternatives. This summer, Gap announced plans to produce clothing at factories in Myanmar, becoming the first major U.S. retailer to enter the country since Western sanctions were lifted in 2012. Sub-Saharan Africa is another growing cut-and-sew destination, according to Seferian.

TRADE AGREEMENTS:

More brands will seek out countries with free-trade agreements to gain duty advantages, according to a May report released by WRAP. For example, Vietnam and Malaysia are among the nations that would benefit if the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is finalized.

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RS No. 42

ADVERTISER INDEX

| ADVERTISERS/SUPPLIERS | RS# | PG# |
|--|-----|-----|
| A-B Emblem asi/30102 | 3 | 60 |
| American & Efirid asi/540992 | 27 | 24 |
| American Apparel asi/35297 | 10 | 1 |
| Bc Supply Co asi/1363120 | 58 | 60 |
| Bito asi/1363388 | 37 | 62 |
| Blazers R Us asi/141382 | 26 | 60 |
| Blue Generation asi/40653 | 12 | 13 |
| C B F Labels Inc asi/42980 | 13 | 60 |
| Change! Inc. asi/44568 | 56 | 43 |
| Charles River Apparel asi/44620 | 14 | 21 |
| Chl Inc. | 46 | 62 |
| Chulani Promotional Products, Inc. asi/45100 | 15 | 4 |
| Coldesi Inc. asi/588100 | 28 | 6 |
| Coldesi Inc. asi/588100 | 30 | 15 |
| Coldesi Inc. asi/588100 | 29 | 30 |
| Coldesi Inc. asi/588100 | 31 | 34 |
| Conde Systems asi/1428657 | 39 | 32 |
| Digitizing Factory Co Ltd | 40 | 60 |
| Djs Labels Inc. | 49 | 62 |
| Epson DTG. | 52 | 23 |
| Express Digitizing.com asi/700145 | 32 | 60 |
| Express Digitizing.com asi/700145 | 33 | 60 |
| Fawn Embroidery Services Inc. asi/702575 | 61 | 62 |
| FP Services Inc. asi/53475 | 16 | 26 |
| Freehand Graphics Inc. | 59 | 63 |
| Fruit of the Loom | 44 | CV4 |
| Gunold USA Inc. | 43 | 62 |
| Gunold USA Inc. | 42 | 60 |
| Hanes/Champion asi/59528 | 35 | 11 |

| | | |
|--|----|-----|
| Hanes/Champion asi/59528 | 36 | 29 |
| Hanes/Champion asi/59528 | 34 | CV2 |
| Jerzees | 19 | 5 |
| L A T Sportswear asi/65948 | 11 | 16 |
| Mesa Distributors | 45 | 62 |
| Mesa Distributors, Inc. asi/16004 | 66 | 32 |
| Midwest Lettering | 51 | 63 |
| Next Level Apparel asi/73867 | 17 | 7 |
| Pacific Sportswear & Emblems | 41 | 60 |
| Pantograms | 38 | 31 |
| Pizzazz asi/78230 | 18 | 60 |
| Psi NI Der Reed Exhibitions | 55 | 14 |
| Ricoma International Corp. asi/18200 | 5 | 17 |
| Peterson Research Lab | 54 | 62 |
| SanMar asi/84863 | 20 | 9 |
| Shamrock Design asi/1363514 | 60 | 60 |
| Stahls' ID Direct asi/88984 | 21 | 35 |
| Stouse Inc. asi/89910 | 22 | 62 |
| Sunstar Usa.Inc. | 47 | CV3 |
| The Sewphisticated Stitcher & Discount Emb Blanks asi/323872 | 24 | 2 |
| Transfer Express | 23 | 12 |
| Wilcom America | 48 | 3 |
| Xiamen Idea Star Import & Export Co., Ltd. asi/9507 | 4 | 25 |

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STITCHES READER SERVICE NUMBERS

| COMPANY | RSN | PAGE# |
|---|-----|------------|
| AMC Special Markets (asi/30198) | 77 | 38 |
| Bella + Canvas (asi/39590) | 98 | 19 |
| Bishop, The Garment Co. (asi/40585) | 86 | 40 |
| Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415) | 92 | 42 |
| Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788) | 78 | 38 |
| Boxercraft (asi/41325) | 76 | 19, 38 |
| Busy Hands Embroidery | 90 | 41 |
| Charles River Apparel (asi/44620) | 89 | 41 |
| Dalco | 100 | 34 |
| Dream Maker Embroidery & More | 94 | 42 |
| Driving Impressions (asi/50864) | 84 | 39, 40, 41 |
| Embroidered Apparel Solutions | 81 | 38 |
| Floriani Commercial Products | 111 | 36 |
| Graphic Solutions Group | 109 | 36 |
| Great Dane Graphics | 102 | 35 |
| Hirsch International (asi/14982) | 106 | 37 |
| Imprintables Warehouse (asi/58475) | 112 | 36 |
| Katis Design (asi/244898) | 97 | 19 |
| Kellie's Kreations | 79 | 38 |
| King Par (asi/64861) | 88 | 41 |
| Madeira USA | 99 | 33 |
| Mega Cap Inc. (asi/70434) | 91 | 41 |
| Next Level Apparel (asi/73867) | 80 | 19, 38 |
| Penn Emblem (asi/77120) | 101 | 34 |
| Ryonet | 108 | 36 |
| S&S Activewear (asi/84358) | 85 | 40 |
| Sandpiper Embroidery | 96 | 42 |
| Sparkle Plenty Designs Inc. (asi/88442) | 95 | 42 |
| Stormtech Performance Apparel (asi/89864) | 82 | 39, 41 |
| Swan Marketing | 93 | 42 |
| Timbuk2 (asi/91272) | 83 | 39 |
| Transfer Express (asi/91804) | 103 | 35 |
| Tri-Mountain (asi/92125) | 87 | 19, 41 |
| Visual Impressions (asi/734150) | 113 | 41 |
| Wild Side | 110 | 36 |

COMING NEXT ISSUE

What's coming up in December *Stitches*

by Nicole Rollender

The Power 75

In the December issue, we'll reveal our fifth-annual list of the most influential people in the industry. Who's on the list? They're the people everyone knows and wants to emulate. They challenge the status quo and drive growth – they're the innovators who develop new and exciting decorating and digitizing techniques; the thinkers who bring new equipment, software and apparel products to the market; and more.

The Power Poll

Our 2014 Power 75 listers will weigh in on a myriad of important topics, including what technology will be important to the decorated-apparel industry in 2015, which decoration will be most requested by buyers and more. Plus, get to know the industry power players even better as they share their reading lists, favorite non-industry websites and more.



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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 November needle on page XX," along with your name, company, address and phone number (or email address) so we can contact you if you're the winner. Mail or fax it to us at *Stitches*, Attn: Needle Patrol, 4800 Street Rd., 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 November needle are due by November 28, 2014. From the correct responses, we'll randomly select one winner who'll receive a \$100 gift certificate, courtesy of Madeira USA, Laconia, NH. Please submit only one entry per drawing. We'll announce the winner in the January issue.



Slick Likes Specialty Skulls

In the August issue, Slick hid in the "Decorating Solutions" department to the left of a specialty skull design from The Wild Side. Nancy Cook of Alexandria, IN-based Nanna's Embroidery was chosen at random from a grand total of 33 responses. As this issue's winner, Nancy will receive Madeira USA's gift certificate. Keep your eyes peeled for the industry's favorite game of hide and seek!

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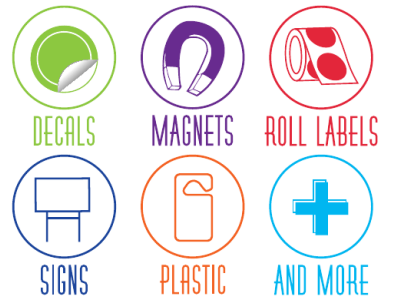
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ASK AN EXPERT

By Erich Campbell

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next issue, you'll learn some smart cyber-selling strategies. See you next issue!

Q *My business has had a website for some time, but it's little more than a Web-based brochure. I know it's time for an update, but I don't know what to add. What does a garment decorator's website really need?*

The first thing to keep in mind that is any business website must cater to the needs of your current or prospective clients – meet them where they “live.” This means that your site must be accessible when, where and how buyers need it to be. If your site doesn't display properly on mobile devices, you're alienating an ever-growing mobile-browsing segment of your base. Caring for your audience helps you decide the types of tools, information and services you'll add to your website.

That said, there's no single solution that works for every business. Some companies may not see the need for much more than an informational site like yours, but the Internet has become much more than a repository for contact information. What you'll add to your site depends largely on the direction you want to expand your business. There are innumerable tools and resources to help you with marketing, direct sales and design-handling. We'll explore some basic options in each category to help you decide which make the most sense for your clients.

Marketing: The most basic marketing tool in inbound marketing (marketing to customers searching for and arriving at your site) is a blog. Though

there's much to say for social media marketing, all such marketing starts with generating content, which should live on your site. All social media should ideally draw traffic back to your online home – and should start with your blog.

Your blog can and should be made up of visual media and text, and when regularly updated, provides you with content to post in social media channels. By pinning blog images to Pinterest, for example, you can bring your inspiration-seeking fans back to your blog, where you expose them to more content, marketing materials and calls to action. Blogging lets you establish your brand and draw that traffic, no matter where you share the initial link, all while helping you to garner more search traffic. Remember, even if you feel that writing isn't your strong suit, a blog can be populated with videos, pictures and podcasts. Not every post has to be a polished article-length slab of text.

With a blogging framework, the expansion opportunities are endless. As it pertains to marketing, add-ons to popular frameworks contain a multitude of tools and services to ease search engine optimization, advertising both on and off-site, calls to action, newsletter subscription mechanisms, social media integration and

much more.

Sales: The most basic sales tool, beyond the obligatory contact information and info-request forms, is your online catalog. Whether self-developed or an embedded version provided by your garment vendor, a searchable catalog is paramount for anyone expecting to conduct sales online. If nothing else, it provides an easy way to share and discuss potential products with customers without leading them away from your site.

If you want to expand into direct online sales, there's a dizzying array of options from simple online shopping carts (including add-ons to blog frameworks) to full-site solutions geared specifically to decorators. The options cover everything from small, free stores piggybacked on supplier catalog sites to full-site frameworks featuring complete front-ends fit to compete with big-name stores as well as back-end setups with customer, job, inventory and resource management.

Design: Provided you've included a list of accepted art specs in your informational site with a description of basic accepted file types and an email address specific to incoming art, the next best tool to implement is a method for direct uploading that accommodates

large files. If you want to cater to a savvy, customization-loving customer, you can add a full online design application to your site. These are often built into the more fully-featured online stores.

Online design suites generally offer a method for your customers to create layouts combining a range of pre-loaded clip art and fonts as well as allowing the upload of custom art. These applications are particularly suited to direct-to-garment printers due to their natively digital nature, but some can handle embroidery as well as the art types, production minimums, color levels and other settings necessary to serve traditional screen printers.

ERICH CAMPBELL, an industry veteran, is an award-winning embroidery digitizer with experience in designing, implementing and maintaining e-commerce websites. A longtime technology fan, ad-hoc IT staffer and constantly-connected Internet dweller, Campbell is in the process of adding social media to the marketing arsenal of Albuquerque, NM-based Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415). Contact: ecampbell@blackduckinc.com.

GOT A DECORATOR DILEMMA?

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



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