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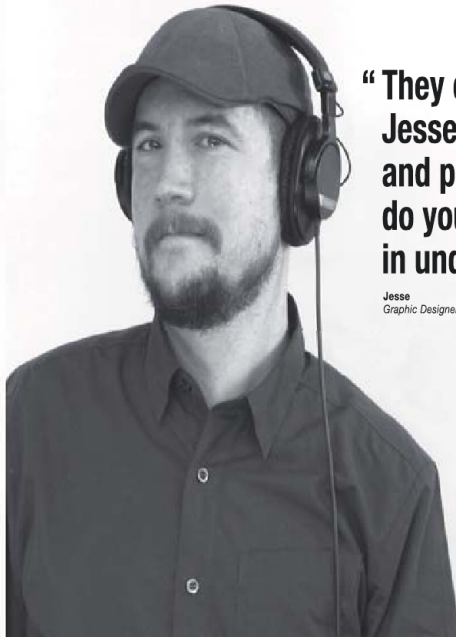
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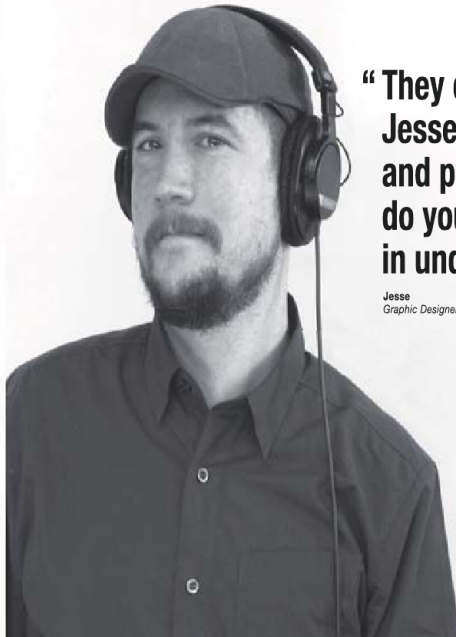
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February 2014

APPAREL DESIGN **AWARDS**

THIS JACKET'S A WINNER.
SEE WHAT ELSE WON **P.34**

GIVE SHIRTS **A HOME** INSIDE THE BOOMING REAL ESTATE MARKET

A SHOWCASE THAT'S GOT IT MADE WITH **SHADES**

SCREEN-PRINTING **SUCCESS**

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Jacket provided by Trimark Sportswear Group



10 new vintage colors » 5 new silhouettes » nano collection





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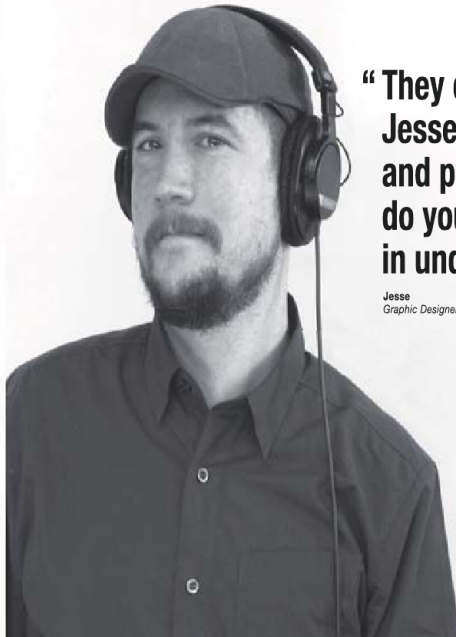
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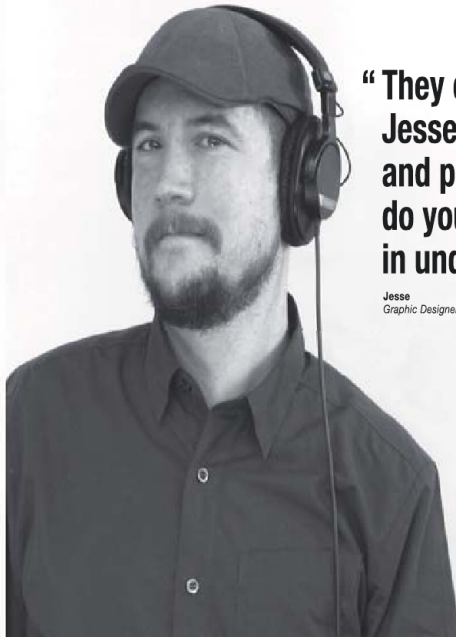
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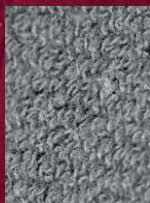
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Colors:
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13 oz/yd² (441 g/m²)

| | |
|--|----------------|
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| | Zinc |
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WEARABLES

FEBRUARY 2014 VOLUME 18, Number 2 www.wearablesmag.com

COVER STORY

34 *Wearables Apparel Design Awards*

Once again we crown the best of the best in the apparel industry. Come check out the winners.

BY C.J. MITTICA, KAREN AKERS AND SABRINA LANDRY

SCREEN-PRINTING SUCCESS

44 *Fast Screening*

An investment in computer-to-screen systems can translate into tremendous cost-savings.

BY EILEEN FRITSCH

49 *The Personal Touch*

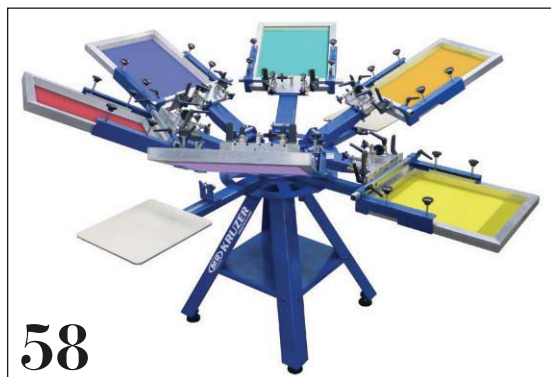
With a variety of techniques and crucial add-on accessories, personalized decoration has never been easier.

BY TONIA KIMBROUGH

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LIGHT ON WEIGHT HEAVY ON WARMTH

CHAMPION PERFORMANCE FLEECE

PLAY LIKE A
Champion

The Look of a Winner

February is home to our 7th Annual *Wearables* Apparel Design Awards competition, which recognizes the best apparel and accessories in the industry. We feature one of the winning jackets on the cover, which

was created and decorated by Trimark Sportswear Group (asi/92122; circle 128 on Free Info Card). The Apparel Design Awards logo was created by ASI Designer Melissa Lascala.

The Jacket

The Sitka jacket (19530 for men, 99530 for women) was designed to be a versatile mid-weight soft shell jacket. It features breathable technical fabrics with a waterproof membrane and modern details like reversed coil zippers and silver reflective panels. Decorations like transfer and laser work wonderfully for the performance fabric, given their lightweight treatment and durability. This jacket's no slouch – it was voted Best Performance/Athletic garment by *Wearables* readers.

The Decoration

Starting with its acquisition by Polyconcept North America, Trimark has vastly expanded its in-house decoration capabilities. On staff they have "Imagineers," or "branding experts that take artwork and engineer it in a new way to decorate a garment," says Nadia Baggetta, digital marketing coordinator for Trimark Sportswear Group. "They approach designs with a retail perspective and impact and style." For the cover garment, the Imagineers combined laser decoration on the left side and up the left chest, and layered its True Edge Transfer over top. True Edge uses free standing text, four-color process or PMS spot color and can use text as small as eight-point type. The laser creates a tone-on-tone look without puncturing the fabric, making it perfect for technical fabrics and blending. "These multiple-hit decorations," says Baggetta, "gave the *Wearables* and Apparel Design Awards logo a custom, trendy look, with a great amount of detail and a clean presentation."

The Logo

The *Wearables* Apparel Design Awards logo received a whole new look, courtesy of Lascala. "I wanted to jazz up what was used in previous years while keeping with the look and feel of the *Wearables* redesign," she says. "I used the fonts from the magazine to achieve this. The logo went through rounds of changes and tweaks and I feel that the end result is pretty effective."

Decoration Tips

Baggetta has a few key tips when it comes to utilizing decoration with multiple techniques and locations:

- **Simple is better:** Utilize familiar, common or unique corporate elements (icon, text and color) for immediate brand recognition.
- **Harmony in decoration and design:** Select elements that work together in shape, color, size and location.
- **Reinforce the brand's message:** Repeating an element or the name helps reinforce the brand.
- **Impact elements:** Consider crests, bold single words, establish dates, location, and tag lines to add detail and build on the brand's message.
- **Give and take:** Allow flexibility with the elements. Permit alternative colors, re-arrangement of the elements and simplifying complex details (shadows or multi-colors). This can greatly help with quality production and turn around on orders.



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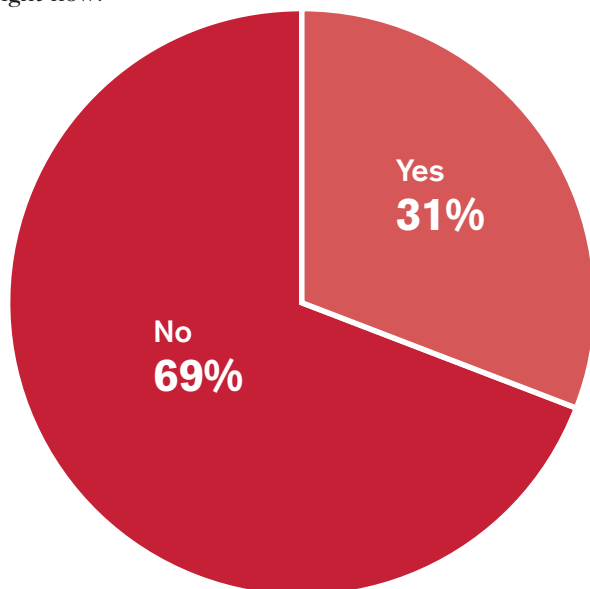
Ballot Stuffing

While only a few garments were crowned winners in our Apparel Design Awards, there are dozens and dozens of great finalists that are worthy of your attention. Head online to see the full slate of finalists – and perhaps spy something for your next apparel sale.

POLL

Now Hiring

On ASICentral.com, we asked: “Is your company hiring additional staffers right now?”



VIDEO

Distressed to Impressed

Vintage designs continue to be a favorite look for screen-printed tees. In this video, *Wearables* Editor C.J. Mittica discusses the distressed trend and shows off some striking designs from top screen printers.

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NEWSLETTER

Heads Up

Bare head? There's a hat for that. And while the ball cap continues to be the crown of the headwear category, fashion headwear is flourishing with a variety of trendy styles. Our *Wearables* Style e-newsletter delves into the top products and selling strategies.

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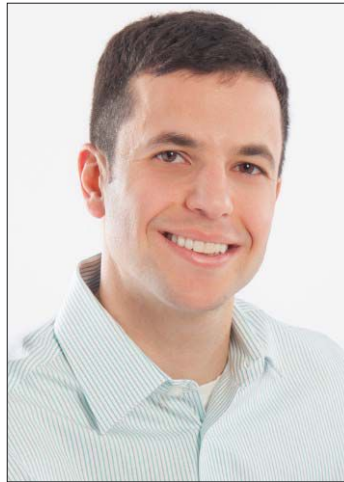
It's awards season. You probably have your favorites – the Oscars, the Grammys, the Golden Globes. Would you believe me if I said mine is our Apparel Design Awards?

What I enjoy most about our awards program is that it's forward facing. Hollywood's big-time awards honor the past. The *Wearables* Apparel Design Awards look to the future. They're really a sneak preview of what leading suppliers have in store for the upcoming year. There is a bevy of new products here, and they allow us to see which trends the industry is really latching on to for 2014.

So what can you expect to see? Here are four trends to look out for:

1. Suppliers are getting much bolder about incorporating color and pattern (and both together, in many cases). Check out the winning entry in the Wovens category. Think you would have seen that a few years ago?
2. The line between regular and eco apparel is permanently blurred. The styling of eco garments is so indistinguishable that it's impossible to tell the difference.
3. Performance fabrics have really seeped into every nook and cranny of this industry, and certainly every category of our awards. It's the standard from the office to the gym.
4. Color accents are popping up everywhere. Outerwear and hoodies in particular are featuring contrast zippers and stitching to add subtle hints of color.

This is no easy competition. We have dozens of top suppliers participate, and they all bring their latest and best creations. I say this every year for our awards, but it's still true: The winners deserve high praise, but all of the finalists deserve to be part of your product mix. That's 162 great items that you should be looking to sell. Turn to our cover story for all the details. There's no time to waste; the new year is already underway.



“What I enjoy most about our awards program is that it's forward facing. The *Wearables* Apparel Design Awards look to the future.”

What else can you expect in this issue? We have a comprehensive look at computer-to-screen systems, one of the latest innovations in screen printing. They forgo the need to make your own films and create quite a savings opportunity for high-volume shops.

In addition, we have a look at the creeping demand for personalization in decoration. This was one of the major trends when I attended the SGIA show this past fall. Equipment companies have come up with a number of ways to easily add names, numbers and more. It's quite simple: someone who receives a garment with a personalized detail like her name is far less likely to throw something out or give it away.

There is more to look out for. A cool color-blocking combo that can't fail. Strategies to capitalize on the real estate market's revival. Step-by-step guides to print your own heat transfers and create glitter decorations. The best part? You can read this issue in much less time than it takes to stage the Academy Awards.

Thanks for reading,

Charles J. Mitten



WHAT'S IN MY CLOSET?

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

This issue, our submission comes from Chelsea McKillip, relationship manager for iClick (asi/62124) and iClick Decorate (asi/63125): “My favorite branded shirt says ‘Be Remarkable’ and has a flying Buddha on it. It is super comfy and soft – American Apparel (asi/35297), of

course. The shirt means so much to me because of what it represents: Going above and beyond in all aspects of life and truly being a remarkable individual. The shirt always makes me smile and I get so many comments every time I wear it! It is bright and fun, and I just love what it represents. This is actually a shirt provided from my work where I am currently a relationship manager at iClick. I feel so fortunate to be surrounded by truly remarkable individuals, and the shirt also reminds me of all of my awesome fellow clickers and our amazing clients.”



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TRENDS

THE HOTTEST
APPAREL AND
ACCESSORIES

By Alissa Tallman



DECORATION TIP

Fan and fashion wear do not have to be mutually exclusive. For shirts that can be worn by both the fans in the seats and members of the team, think distressed prints, graphic imagery and off-location printing for a high-impact look.

T-Shirt screen printed by Visual Impressions (circle 135 on Free Info Card)

Color Coordination

CRISP, EYE-CATCHING and dramatic, red, white and black look super when acting as a single color palette. From 2014 winter fashions by Peter Pilotto to brand-new spring designs by Antonio Berardi, this vibrant color combo is a fashion mainstay.

"Black, white and red are all core colors," explains John Perez, marketing representative for Tri-Mountain (asi/92125). "Black and white alone can be considered a neutral, and adding a splash of red (or potentially, any other color) makes them pop so much more. This combo is a great way to bring attention to a specific color within a design, as each tone evokes a different feeling."

Perez points out one very prominent brand that showcases this color scheme: Coke. "Coca-Cola's logo and products are built on this classic color scheme – and perhaps that's why the brand is so classic," he says. He references a range of advertising mediums and other categories that make use of this triad, including fashion, interior design, footwear and art.

Perez feels this combo owes its effectiveness primarily to its red element. "Red is such a beautiful, rich and vivid color and should be flaunted year-round as opposed to just during the winter holiday season," he suggests. "If you want to infuse some boldness into a promotional campaign, choose red."



From top left: Acrylic/silk scarf (SU-YSW-B16-1) from **Assertive Creativity LLC** (asi/37166; circle 81 on Free Info Card). Rustic baseball cap (3005) from **Cap America Inc** (asi/43792; circle 83 on Free Info Card). Combed cotton colorblocked tee (1272) from **WearMagic** (asi/95765; circle 82 on Free Info Card). Color-blocked men's polo (K109) from **Tri-Mountain** (asi/92125; circle 84 on Free Info Card).



Eyewear

BY CHUCK ZAK

AS A KID, wearing eyeglasses was a mark of terminal dorkdom. Strangely, however, the phenomenon of adults wearing glasses purely for aesthetic reasons is often a mark of fashion-forward thinking. Where does that leave promotional eyewear? Same place it's always been: perfectly poised as a good-looking, functional and far-sighted promotional tool.

Sunglasses carry the torch (and shield the glare from that flame) for promotional eyewear. But the full category of eyewear and its accessories take advantage of a number of advancements in design and imprinting technology. Lighter materials make them more comfortable yet sturdier, and new printing techniques allow the lens to become an unexpected advertising space. The boom in microfiber also allows for safe cleaning of lenses without scratching, extending the life and promotional value of eyewear even further. Check out this month's showcase to see what's new and what never stopped looking cool.



1. Kid's goggles (GO-062) featuring a shock absorbent guard on inner frame from **See-Sun** (asi/88584; circle 114 on Free Info Card). 2. Neoprene eyeglass strap (PEY1300) from **Lanco** (asi/66224; circle 118 on Free Info Card). 3. Trendy two-toned sunglasses (AV-PKL-0-WH-PK) featuring pink lenses and premium PC frame from **Eyevertising** (asi/57371; circle 112 on Free Info Card). 4. High-fashion sunglasses (C1011-94B) inspired by the iconic style of Jackie Onassis from **EyeKing** (asi/51260; circle 113 on Free Info Card). 5. Sleek safety glasses (ZONE II) featuring silver frames and built-in nose pads from **Fields Manufacturing** (asi/54100; circle 106 on Free Info Card). 6. Malibu glasses (WC8058-C) with a neon colored inside frame and clear lens from **West Coast Sunglasses** (asi/96566; circle 111 on Free Info Card). 7. All-cotton eyeglass retainer (12115) is easily adjustable and fits most standard frames from **Chums** (asi/45107; circle 116 on Free Info Card). 8. Microfiber pouch (C1V) holds, protects and cleans sunglasses and mobile phones from **Hit Promotional Products** (asi/61125; circle 117 on Free Info Card). 9. Safety glasses (GS-1755BM) with built-in ventilation for extra fog control from **Atteff International** (asi/37455; circle 108 on Free Info Card). 10. Men's Harley Davidson sunglasses have 100% UVA and UVB protection from **Castle Merchandising** (asi/44315; circle 76 on Free Info Card). 11. Wayfarers (CG225) that can be customized with any Pantone color and permanent logo on the lenses from **College Glasses** (asi/45657; circle 119 on Free Info Card). 12. Durable safety glasses (JR01) featuring telescoping temples from **OPTICAL/SAFETY** (asi/79898; circle 107 on Free Info Card). 13. Reading glasses (666270) featuring plastic rims and durable, clear lenses from **American Greenwood** (asi/35500; circle 109 on Free Info Card). 14. Classic unisex aviator sunglasses (M1118) from **Boho** (asi/40811; circle 110 on Free Info Card).

Three Selling Tips

1 Follow the sun. For sunglasses, it's easy to over-acquaint the product with summer. Images of sunbathers and beach frolickers might overshadow the potential markets for sunglasses in other seasons. "Obviously sunglasses are great for warmer markets where people wear them all year-round," says Francis Rodenbaugh, account executive with College Glasses (asi/45657), "but sunglasses are also great for the colder climates for the glare off the snow." That could appeal to snowboarders and skiers, but also to folks in snow-prone regions tired of shoveling the white stuff while snowblind.

2 Think young. Mallory Dempster, marketing account executive with Jack Nadel International (asi/279600) emphasizes the appeal of eyewear for "young, up-and-coming companies with a younger demo." Both the customers and employees of tech-savvy companies skew young, and it's an industry that will only get larger. Dempster also recommends seeking out clients geared towards the nightlife market, which can include clubs, DJs, bands and their uber-hip clientele. "[Eyewear is] an easy giveaway with a higher perceived value," says Dempster. "And who doesn't love a free pair of cute shades?"

3 Imprint creatively. Glasses may seem to lack imprint area, but that's only if you're not looking hard enough. Rodenbaugh points out the variety of imprint methods his company uses such as full-frame, full-arm or half-tone lens printing. While these methods may appeal more to a younger demo like college students, corporate clients can still get plenty of exposure with imprints that Rodenbaugh says "tend to be a little tamer, with mostly just printing on the arms."

Decoration Tip

Not every pair of sunglasses should be branded. (Would you put your company name on a pair of Ray-Bans? Probably not.) For shades that rely on brand-name appeal, think about engraved or etched cases with a company name.

LET IT SNOW WITH

White

ONCE UPON A TIME, white was an overlooked neutral. Yet over the last several years, it has emerged as a leading “color,” especially for 2014. Whether elevating prints like the polka-dot and leopard-skin from Emanuel Ungaro or stealing the show, as with Elie Saab’s romantic white dresses, this hue never fails to be at once enchanting and classic.

“White is timeless,” says Julie Pagé, junior coordinator for Fersten Worldwide Inc. (asi/53974). “It’ll always have its place among the different color trends that develop over time and will never go out of style.” She remarks on white’s widespread appeal and how remarkably applicable it is to a diverse range of promotional opportunities: “White is universal; after all, it is an integral part of every color and is thus associated with each. It can be used for a number of occasions, whether for clothing, for decoration or for advertising.”



Decorated white thermal top (F01) from **In Your Face Apparel** (asi/62494; circle 80 on Free Info Card)



Women’s knit sweater (FA7520) from **Fersten Worldwide Inc** (asi/53974; circle 79 on Free Info Card)

Decoration Tip

White is the ultimate blank canvas for your creative decorative capabilities. In Your Face Apparel’s “Divas Snow Gear” top features several specialty print combos, including plastisol and water-base screen prints.



Smartphone wristlet (02105474-WHITE) from **AMC Special Markets** (asi/30198; circle 78 on Free Info Card)

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DENIM TRENDS ARE in steady supply this winter and are slated for success into spring. Junya Watanabe's fall collection included slouchy plaid-patched jeans, and retail favorites ASOS and Free People both featured overalls in their winter 2014 catalogs. Jean jackets and comfy denim shirts can be found in several colors besides basic blue. Both items are as commonly donned for the office as they are to run errands. Brightly colored logos simply pop when applied to this fabric, to say nothing of embroidery application and sublimation prints. Practically any business qualifies when it comes to denim, particularly those that are youth-driven and entrepreneurial.



Women's cotton denim shirt (L652) from **SanMar** (asi/84863; circle 86 on Free Info Card). Embroidered by **Stitch Designers** (asi/741145; circle 121 on Free Info Card).



Men's jean jacket (J291) from **Broberry Mfg. Inc.** (asi/42057; circle 87 on Free Info Card).



Men's five-pocket jeans (MCB06212) from **Cutter & Buck** (asi/47965; circle 85 on Free Info Card).

FASHION TIP

Because navy can act as a neutral, denim pairs wonderfully with prints. Women can match up their favorite jeans with a floral top. Denim-on-denim of different washes is an appealing look for men and women, such as a dark denim jacket with light denim jeans.

Decoration Tip

The sturdy fabric of denim is made for embroidery – and embroidery does not have to be boring. Fun colors, shapes and gradients are all useful to punch-up a design. “Some people do not understand that with good digitizing and experienced people that you can do gradients, subtle shadowing and color steps to give it depth and somewhat of a 3D type of effect,” says Joe Thompson, national accounts manager/marketing director for **Stitch Designers** (asi/741145). “The colors and design work well on this type of shirt. A denim shirt with embroidery is a durable combo that can withstand regular daily wear that should last quite a while and still look great.”



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42400L Ladies Long Sleeve T-Shirt

THE CHALLENGE

“How can we integrate the new employees after acquiring a competitor?”

For Scott Sutton, it is essential to integrate staff effectively for a merger or acquisition to succeed. The vice president of franchise development for Safeguard Business Systems (asi/316203) would know, having spearheaded more than 45 such transactions between 2010 and 2013 for the estimated \$38.4 million distributorship. “Integration is an extremely important facet of what we do,” he says.

To facilitate integration, management

needs to move quickly and have a staff integration plan. David Braun, CEO of Capstone Strategic, a management consulting firm, suggests crafting a written plan that is built upon the answers to two important questions: Where do we begin? What do we want the new company to look like? To be implemented over the course of the first 100 days, the plan will serve as a working blueprint for management, allowing key players to pave as even a road as possible for desired integration. “Procrastination will lead to more resistance as employees go back to business as usual,” warns Braun, the author of *Successful Acquisitions*.

With an overarching plan in place, an equally important component of the integration process must kick into gear: Communication. Mergers and acquisitions understandably generate worry among employees. The best way to minimize anxiety and get staff functioning efficiently amid change is to communicate extensively about the planned direction of the company, the essential values that will inform how the business operates and, crucially, the specific roles and expectations for employees. “In the absence of good information, rumors start circulating and things can go awry quickly,” says Lisa Bull, director of training and communication for Ceridian LifeWorks, which provides employee assistance and wellness solutions to make workplaces more productive.

To facilitate communication, Bull suggests planning out how – and who – will convey critical information. She also recommends holding open forums in which employees are free to ask questions and get answers about how things will change. Safeguard sends a “due-diligence” team into companies it is



“In the absence of good information, rumors start circulating and things can go awry quickly.”

Lisa Bull, Ceridian LifeWorks

acquiring. In addition to discussing Safeguard’s values, vision, and business, the representatives answer a host of questions from staff, often over the course of two to five days, but longer if need be. “Open communication and relationship-building,” says Sutton, “is critical to getting integration right.”

To ensure things go as desired, it’s important to clearly define expectations and to provide diligent guidance on processes and procedures that will be new for staffers. Safeguard pays particular attention to this phase of the acquisition, sending in representatives to the acquired company to guide employees through changes. — *Christopher Ruvo*

A Question Of Branding

Every time an acquisition is made, the issue of branding arises. Executives must decide between overhauling the acquired firm’s brand, maintaining the purchased company’s brand or even combining what’s best about the acquiring company and its acquisition to form a new brand altogether.

No one option is always correct. Instead, it’s important to determine what branding will prove most attractive to target audiences. In the case of Twinkies, for example, C. Dean Metropoulos and Apollo Global Management chose to keep the Twinkies brand name because of its iconic status and resonance with customers, points out David Braun, CEO of Capstone Strategic. Regardless of which direction branding goes, it’s critical to communicate clearly with employees. “Make sure,” says Braun, “the branding plans are shared with the workforce fully so all employees understand the new vision of the company and are excited about the future.” — *CR*

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MARKET SPOTLIGHT

Real Estate Revival

Ramp up sales to the strengthening real estate sector.

The Great Recession delivered a lashing to the real estate industry. Sales tanked, property values plummeted and new-home starts seemed to all but evaporate. But over the last couple years, the hard-hit sector has been rebounding. While the heady pre-recession bubble days are not yet back, growth is occurring in both the commercial and residential real estate worlds.

The churning activity equates to opportunity for distributors and screen printers, who can capitalize on real estate's momentum with everyone from residential realtors and mortgage brokers to property management companies. "The real estate market is perfect for image apparel programs in 2014," says Taraynn Lloyd, marketing director at Edwards Garment Co. (asi/51752).

Consider that from 2011 to 2012, new home sales increased 20%, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, and were up the same amount in the first eight months of 2013. Meanwhile, existing homes were moving, too, with units sold up 6% year-over-year through last October. Hiccups in the broader economic recovery could potentially stall gains, but the National Association of Realtors predicts that Americans will buy 5.2 million existing homes this year, a 2% rise over the trade organization's estimate for 2013.

Forward progress has been underway in the commercial real estate industry, too. Deloitte reported that the sector's 2013 performance was marked by continued recovery

in asset prices, transactions and capital availability. In fact, asset prices moved close to 2007 peaks in major metropolitan markets. What's also encouraging is that private equity and international investor interest in stateside commercial real estate increased. "Real optimism has emerged as a key theme in the real estate market for 2014 as trends are progressing significantly through the economic and real estate recovery cycles," says Mitch Roschelle, U.S. real estate advisory practice leader at PwC, an auditing, tax and consulting company.

Some imprinted apparel providers are already capitalizing on the real estate market. Black Duck, a distributor with extensive in-house decoration offerings that include screen printing, is a preferred vendor for Keller Williams. Twice annually, Black Duck attends the nationwide real estate agency's trade shows to set up an apparel-packed booth that resembles a pop-up retail shop. Additionally, Black Duck runs a web store where Keller realtors from across the country can purchase an array of apparel and other products. Business has been brisk, with Black Duck selling performance polos, stylish button-downs and T-shirts. Other products like nametags, key chains and caps appeal to this market too, says Erich Campbell, e-commerce manager at Black Duck. "There's been a lot of movement going on," says Campbell, noting Black Duck first got in with Keller by networking through a mutual contact.

For those interested in courting real estate industry prospects like realtors, keep in mind that buyers often want fashionable, comfortable, easy-to-care-for options that identify their brand, says Lloyd, adding: "The real-estate market is all about servicing the public or corporate client and building a trust bond with them. The image they

present must convey this strategy. Discuss how you can help contribute to this strategy while developing a look that complements their selling program." — CR

Real Estate Rev-Up

Pitch these items to prospects in the real estate industry.

A great look for realtors, mortgage brokers and commercial property managers, the new Vansport Nailhead Polo (2670) features a sophisticated pattern, tagless neck label and moisture management properties. Available from **Vantage Apparel** (asi/93390; circle 105 on Free Info Card).



This lightweight single-breasted suit coat (6680) features the classic tailoring and formal style agents are looking for. Made from wool and polyester, it is perfect for a brokerage's embroidered branding. Available from **Edwards Garment** (asi/51752; circle 91 on Free Info Card).

BY THE NUMBERS

11%

Projected growth in real estate broker and sales agent jobs between 2010 and 2020.

Source: U.S. Labor Statistics

I Believe...

The who, what and wear of industry experts

BY TERRY MCGUIRE, AS TOLD TO CHRISTOPHER RUVO

... Performance apparel and women's wear are on the rise: In our industry, there are two key apparel trends for 2014. First is the continued growth and expansion of performance apparel styles and price points. This has been one of the key growth-drivers in apparel the past three years, and will continue to be for the next couple. The other trend is more styles, colors and variety in women's apparel. The industry is finally waking up to the demographic reality: There are more women in decision-making roles in business.

... We must manage supply chains strategically to be profitable: The biggest challenge facing our industry is margin compression due in large part to "loss-leader" pricing strategies by many e-commerce sites that are using low prices on key products to draw prospective buyers. When the price bar lowers, the only way to overcome it is effective supply-chain management. At HALO, we devote a substantial amount of resources into buying better so we can provide more pricing and profit flexibility for our account executives in a very competitive online (and off-line) landscape.

... In doing the opposite of the competition: Since more distributors are mass e-mailing clients and prospects,

"Be polite, be humble, be compassionate and keep your name out of the newspaper."

we created an award-winning direct-mail catalog that has driven a great deal of sales. The biggest opportunity for distributors is delivering a message of added value that is received and retained by a buyer very near the time of a purchasing decision.

... Bali should be on your bucket list: One place I haven't been to yet that I want to visit is Bali. I love the water, and the water and the culture there look exceptional.

... You should always treat the people you do business with like family: Be open, honest and fair. Respect that each individual and their needs are unique and should be treated accordingly.

... My grandmother was a wise woman: The person who has had the most influence on me is my grandmother, who helped raise me. She taught me that you can get a great deal done with common sense and a respect for other peoples' perspectives. And, that the little things count: Be polite, be humble, be compassionate and "keep your name out of the newspaper."

... Your best marketing is your people: We create marketing tools that highlight what we feel is our not-so-secret weapon – the HALO account executive. They can out-sell and out-create any website or direct-mail brochure. Our tools and messaging focus on their ability to create low-cost/high-value promotional campaigns for any sized business.

... Opportunity for apparel sales abounds in key markets: Secondary education and health-care costs are indexing well above the economy as a whole so there is more money available for promotion in these industries. Fortunately, those are both markets that rely heavily on apparel for recognition and promotion. Energy is another substantial market opportunity, but



Terry McGuire

- Senior Vice President of Marketing at HALO Branded Solutions (asi/356000)
- Appeared on *Counselor* magazine's "Hot List"
- 28-year ad specialty industry veteran who speaks frequently at industry events on everything from supply chain management to marketing

only for specific technical/safety apparel certified for drilling operators.

... Social media is part of the strategy, not the strategy: There is no single-source panacea to great marketing and business building. Social media is an integral part of an effective business-building plan, but it is not what will determine growth or not. Regardless, like any tool, it's worthless unless you have a clearly defined strategy to best utilize it.

... The best sports moments are personal: I was a coach for both my son and daughter when they were younger, so when it comes to greatest sports moments ever, I have a thousand that qualify. Of course, they only qualify for me.

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INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Change Is Good

You don't have to wait to get today's fashion trends.

BY JACKIE WHITFIELD

I used to have a poster in my office that said “The only constant in Fashion is ... Change.” But that was in my retail days, and when I moved to the promotional products industry in 2000, the words on that poster lost their relevance, so I put it aside. That's not to say that wearables products did not follow trends; they did, but the references were not too closely aligned with what was current in retail offerings.

Over the last few years, a significant increase of retail influence has begun to emerge in the promotional products industry. What we wear to work has become more aligned with what is happening in the world of fashion. Several old standards in our industry – women and men should wear the exact same styles; color offerings should be limited to neutral basics; apparel should be designed to avoid direct references to current fashion trends – have fallen by the wayside. Retail brands increasingly share the promotional products landscape and will continue to push the style envelope to new levels.

“Over the last few years, a significant increase of retail influence has begun to emerge.”

Just look at our industry's most recent launches, and you could very well be looking at the new launch for a number of current retail-branded collections. The best collections offer a well-rounded offering of classic styles as well as styles that are trend-setting and more fashion-forward than ever before. The significance of retail inspiration is not limited to apparel styling, but also evident in the wide array of performance fabrics and other technical applications that would typically be only found in high-end performance active collections.

Innovations in decoration are also playing a big role in the enhancement of retail-inspired fashions. Style selection was limited because the few decoration choices that were available couldn't work with every performance fabric or pattern choice. Today, there is a new generation of logo applications – debossing, laser and heat transfer – that enhances both technical fabrics and modern colors and style. These techniques create looks that range from subtle tonal and distressed to exceptionally precise reproductions of complex logos. A highly-skilled team of graphic designers works closely with the apparel team in order to create products that follow retail trends.

Bringing the latest trends to the promotional marketplace isn't a matter of copying and pasting. The most expert design teams can take the newest trends and make them work for promotional apparel needs. As an example, the hottest trend in technical outerwear at retail this season is bold prints and vivid colors. A literal translation of these styles lines would make the placement of an eye-catching logo a challenge. Some slight but meaningful changes – a clever realignment of style lines; a tonal reenactment of the print moved to the inside; some visual enhancements such as a gradient zipper or reflective laser welding – and voila, a great

Jackie Whitfield is the vice president of merchandising for Trimark Sportswear Group (asi/92122). She has over 30 years of experience in developing and managing product lines. She identifies current and emerging fashion and product trends to meet client preferences and overall market demands.



jacket that both captures the latest trends and enhances any brand in the market. This is actually a true story – I just described the making of the Ozark insulated jacket in Trimark's Elevate collection.

With so much that is new and current, how can you adapt these changing products to your customers' needs? Understanding what customers are looking for and how their needs pertain to the wide array of products available is key. They have seen many of the latest trends, but there is more to capturing the essence of a brand. What look is required – traditional, contemporary or trend setting? Is the intent of the brand to push the envelope or maintain a classic theme? For the latter, you can still offer a subtle twist of new innovation to demonstrate forward movement without compromising the integrity of the brand.

When previewing collections, ask the product teams where the inspiration came from and who the intended end-user is. Some of the best presentations I have participated in end up with sales teams throwing out prospects for the newest wow pieces. It's exciting to see ideas flowing fast and furious with comments as to where the products can be positioned and what brand would be a candidate for these retail inspirations.

Whatever the required look or performance requirement, corporate apparel collections will surely capture more up-to-the-minute retail trends than ever before. Who knows: Maybe in the future, retail brands will look to the promotional apparel collections for inspiration. At this point, anything is possible.

I am going to continue looking for that poster, and when I find it, it's going back up on the wall in my office, though maybe with one small revision: “The only constant in Promotional Fashion is ... Change.”

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BEGINNER - 100

Find Corporate Harmony with 'Dazzling Blue'

There's no need to be blue about Pantone's pick for the "it" color of Spring 2014. The shade called "Dazzling Blue" (Pantone 18-3949) is really a pepped-up version of cobalt. Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Pantone Color Institute, attributes the shade's popularity to consumers' desire for stability, as well as for "thoughtful, emotional and artistic equilibrium."

If the shade seems familiar, there's good reason. It compares closely to Facebook's signature blue and to the blue gradient used by Citibank. Best Buy uses a similar blue as a background to makes its bright yellow logo

really pop. As complementary colors, the blue and yellow create an eye-catching contrast ideal for advertising.

In general, blue is a favored hue of many corporations, running the gamut from navy to royal. Somewhere in between the two traditional colors you will find "Dazzling Blue," adding a creative flourish to blue's implied characteristics of honesty and dependability. Such messaging fits perfectly for companies

"I think everyone has seen their shade of royal or navy, and cobalt just brings a different color to the table."

Angela Wong, Dunbrooke Apparel Corp.
(asi/50930)

in the financial, health-care and automotive industries.

"Cobalt has been a great color for us in the past year," says Angela Wong, merchandise manager for Dunbrooke Apparel Corp. (asi/50930). "We have probably doubled our orders. Since promotional product isn't retail, we don't play with color as much. I think everyone has seen their shade of royal or navy, and cobalt just brings a different color to the table."

Calling All Cobalt

A recent search on ESP for apparel and accessories available in "cobalt blue" came up with over 800 choices, ranging from performance apparel and uniforms to T-shirts, jackets, hats and scarves. Whether your client needs a complete uniform in the "dazzling" shade of blue or a smart accessory to accent a contrasting color, there are options available.

As a strong color, cobalt blue works well with its primary partners yellow and red. More subtle companions would include secondary colors green and violet. Orange, a secondary color born of yellow and red, creates an energetic result next to blue despite being a secondary hue. A companion shade like black lends a gravitas to the garment.

This cotton/poly performance jersey polo (TE 304) is available in cobalt, a similar shade to Pantone's pick for Spring's "it" color. Available from **Dunbrooke Apparel Corp.** (asi/50930; circle 100 on Free Info Card).

Photos courtesy of Dunbrooke Apparel Corp. (asi/50930)



This 100% nylon jacket (8437) pairs cobalt with black for a smart color combination. Available from **Dunbrooke Apparel Corp.** (asi/50930; circle 100 on Free Info Card).



Step Into Slipper Sales

Need to put some pep in the step of your apparel sales? Look for opportunities to sell slippers. They work well with a variety of markets, as well as sending a message that the gift-giver cares about the recipients' comfort and well-being.

"Slippers are commonly used for retreats and resort location-type environments," says Shawn Kanak vice president of sales for Towel Specialties (asi/91605). "Additionally, they are terrific for hotels, spas and comfort-related uses. They make terrific combination gifts with our robe collection, as well as our basket combinations that utilize robes, towels and other amenities from our Cabana Bay collection."

Neet Feet offers a cozy slipper reminiscent of the retail-favored Ugg brand. "The Kozi slippers have been very successful in company stores that enjoy a consumer interest, like VW, which has sold our slippers for about five years," says John Amsterdam, president of Neet Feet. "Other excellent uses are as a corporate travel amenity and executive gifts, especially during the holiday season. We have also made them for professional sports teams and some schools and clubs have used them as fundraising items."

A nice perk that slippers afford is forgiving size issues. Kanak explains that Towel Specialties' lines of slippers are all OSFM (One Size Fits Most) and unisex. "As a rule," he says, "OSFM is great for products that can be re-gifted and these are perfect for that. If the recipient doesn't necessarily wear the product, then he/she probably knows someone that would love to have them."

Neet Feet's Kozi slippers come in a range of sizes for adults and kids, and orders can include any size breakdown. "The slippers have a somewhat flexible fit," Amsterdam says. "So if you didn't know the shoe sizes of the group you want to fit, it's possible to utilize

two to four sizes for adults and have slippers that fit every recipient very well.

Wondering what type of slipper is best for your audience? Consider the different fabrications. When comparing waffle weave to velour, Kanak advises, "The waffle fabric is lighter and offers a cooler effect and is very functional around pools and spas. The velour, closed-toe fabric is built for softer uses around the home and more cold weather events such as holiday gift exchanges." When it comes to choosing the right slipper, Kanak considers a non-slip sole as the most important feature.

Amsterdam's essential considerations come down to perceived value, quality materials, good construction and decoration. "A leather upper sets the standard, with other fabrics having a lower perceived value," he says. "The slipper lining is important because the foot rests there, so a plush fleece or thick, soft inside is desirable. Embroidery is the best option for decoration. And a flexible EVA sole about 10mm thick is the finishing touch for a great, high-quality slipper that will last for years and arrives with a high perceived value."



These slippers from **Towel Specialties** (asi/91605; circle 103 on Free Info Card) each have a companion robe – perfect for an upscale order. The waffle-weave robe (WW10) pairs with the open-toed waffle-weave slippers (left, SW01). The Turkish velour robe style series (RW20/RW40) pairs with the quilted velour slippers (VS5).

Photos courtesy of Towel Specialties (asi/91605)



Slippers from **Terry Town** (asi/90913; circle 101 on Free Info Card) are available in velour (top, SW7001) and a waffle weave (SV7002). Both styles feature Velcro closures and skid-resistant soles.

Photos courtesy of Terry Town (asi/90913)



The new upscale men's and ladies' embroidered leather bedroom slippers (KOZI) from **Neet Feet** (asi/73525; circle 102 on Free Info Card) have been very successful in company stores and as fundraising items.

Photo courtesy of Neet Feet (asi/73525)

ADVANCED – 300

All Hail The Hoodie

Hoodies have come a long way from their original working class roots. First created in the 1930s by Champion as a practical addition to a laborer's sweatshirt, the hood protected men who worked in cold, harsh conditions. As the garment evolved, it became a staple for sports athletes and coaches, keeping the team warm on the field during wintry practices. It soon gained popularity and became commonplace for the youth culture – even as a rebellious grunge statement embraced by punk rockers, Skateboarders and hip-hop artists.

“Lighter fabrics, multimedia decoration and form-fitting cuts make the hoodie attractive for anyone.”

As popularity grew, so did hoodie followers, worn by kids, teens and adults alike. Ultimately, fashionistas found a way to turn the basic hoodie into a trend. Lighter fabrics, multimedia decoration and form-fitting cuts make the hoodie attractive for anyone who simply wants a cozy garment with style.

Here are four new hoodies from SanMar (asi/84863; circle 86 on Free Info Card) that illustrate a modern take on an old-school classic.



SLEEVELESS HOODIE

This **Sport-Tek** garment (LST268) is comprised of side panels for a fashionable fit and has the added function of layering with other garments.



SPORTS HOODIE

The updated, slenderized fit of this **Sport-Tek** pullover hoodie (ST254) boasts beefier 2x2 rib knit details, an improved drawcord and three-panel hood.



RAGLAN HOODIE

New to **SanMar's** District brand is the young men's 50/50 raglan hoodie (DT128), made extra soft with a 50/50 blend of 4.8-oz ringspun cotton and polyester from 26 singles yarn.



FLEECE HOODIE

The **District Concert** fleece (DT801) features a juniors fit and a full-zip style. Its contrasting color drawstring (white or black) also lines the hood and zipper for a strong, modern statement.

Fighting Fabric Pills

Face it, pills happen. Pills are those unsightly little balls of fibers that form on a favorite sweater and can render it unwearable. However, pilling can be significantly reduced by choosing the right fabrics. Natural fibers, for example, are less likely to pill than synthetics. Weave also matters. Because pilling most frequently occurs in fabrics with loose, short fibers, you can significantly limit the problem by selecting garments of smooth, closely woven fabrics. A cotton denim, for example, would be a good bet.

A blog post from Tower Dry Cleaners and Laundry titled “A Pill That’s The Problem And Not The Remedy,” warns that pilling usually develops on softer fabrics with a low twist. Fuzzy fabrics with a nap such as flannel or fleece will pill more rapidly than a smooth

finish. Furthermore, “Knit fabrics pill quicker than woven fabrics since more of the fiber is exposed in the knit loops and are usually constructed with low twist yarns for a soft

texture and feel.”

This may leave you wondering if all soft knitted sweaters are doomed to pilling. Thankfully performance technology in the apparel industry has a solution. Today you’ll find many garments described as having anti-pilling properties, particularly fleece.

“For a garment to be anti-pill you have to make sure the factory buys the better quality of fabric and after the fabric is knitted and dyed, there is a coating process that is applied to make sure that there isn’t any pill after wear,” says Angela Wong, merchandise manager for Dunbrooke Apparel Corp (asi/50930). The new Hayden (3515) is a good example. Its 100% polyester, 5.5 oz polar fleece has been treated to ensure that the jacket remains polished not pill over time.

By Definition

Pilling – A tangled ball of fibers that appears on the surface of a fabric, as a result of wear, abrasion or continued friction or rubbing on the surface of the fabric.

Abrasion Resistance – The degree by which a fabric is able to withstand loss of appearance through surface wear, rubbing, chafing, and other frictional actions.

Source: FabricLink Performance Term Glossary

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FWT-130

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TPS-300



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NUAL *ABLES* REI AWARDS



By C.J. Mittica, Karen Akers and Sabrina Landry

BEST ACCESSORY

Background: Staples Promotional Products (asi/120601) came to Diane Katzman Design to produce a Budweiser bow tie that was unveiled in conjunction with the roll-out of the beer's new bow-tie shaped cans. The design itself needed to be applicable to both sexes. "Since the bow-tie is a pre-tied style, it is easy for a man or woman to wear it," says President Diane Katzman.

Best Feature: Katzman lauds the use of such a small canvas to effectively "broadcast" the logo and message.

Best Market: Bow ties can do well in all markets. "They're hip, with a high perceived value and a great way to differentiate a brand from the competition," adds Katzman.



WINNER:

Bud Bowtie

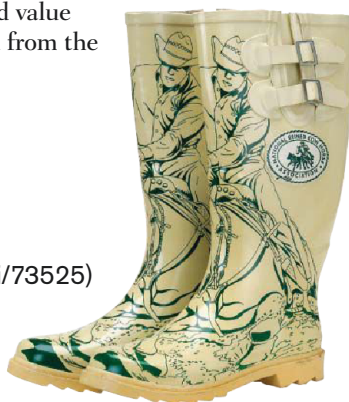
Supplier: Diane Katzman Design (asi/63988)

Circle 126 on Free Info Card

► **1st Runner-Up:**
Wet Wellies (WELL)

Supplier: Neet Feet (asi/73525)

Circle 102 on Free Info Card



► **2nd Runner-Up:**

Beach Tote (0860TL)

Supplier: Alternative Apparel (asi/34850)

Circle 127 on Free Info Card



BEST HOODIE/ SWEATSHIRT

Background: Trimark wanted to create a top-quality fleece that would stand out above others in its style as well as comfort.

Best Feature: With a soft sueded hand feel, the fabric surface captures the essence of ease and warmth.

Best Market: The hoodie is perfect for collegiate, resort and casual outdoor venues. "The Riverside Hoodie can be crested or can be decorated with embroidery techniques that will capture the essence of a true classic," says Nadia Baggetta, digital marketing coordinator for Trimark.



WINNER: Roots Hoodie

Supplier: Trimark Sportswear Group (asi/92122)

Circle 128 on Free Info Card



◀ **1st Runner-Up:**

Glitter Hoodie (8860)

Supplier: J. America (asi/62977)

Circle 129 on Free Info Card

► **2nd Runner-Up:**

Metro Hoodie (CFZ-3)

Supplier: Stormtech (asi/89864)

Circle 130 on Free Info Card



BEST APPAREL INNOVATION

Background: With all of performance technology included in this piece, Trimark set a goal of creating the highest quality and functionality in a jacket.

Best Feature: The Ecoheat lining of the jacket (which prompted Trimark to submit its Ozark jacket in this category) is the feature that sets it most apart, according to Digital Marketing Coordinator Nadia Baggetta. "The jacket maintains a comfortable temperature on the inside no matter how cold it is outside," adds Baggetta.

Best Market: This piece best suits corporate outings and venues that require a high-end, recognizable look.



WINNER:
Insulated Jacket (19701/99701)

Supplier: Trimark Sportswear Group (asi/92122)

Circle 128 on Free Info Card

► **1st Runner-Up:**
Touchscreen Gloves (STA01)

Supplier: SanMar
(asi/84863)

Circle 86 on
Free Info Card



► **2nd Runner-Up:**
Tailgate Hoodie (8815)

Supplier: J. America
(asi/62977)

Circle 129 on
Free Info Card



BEST USE OF COLOR

Background: The Motion soft-shell jacket was made to be as comfortable as a second skin, but as functional as a full winter coat. It's equipped with water and wind resistance and offers breathability and movement with four-way stretch technology. "This jacket has been a part of our line for several years and has quickly become our #1 selling soft shell," says Tiffany Anderson, regional sales manager for Dri Duck.

Best Feature: Its bold shade of green and contrast paneling makes for a jacket that is eye-catching but not outrageously colorful.

Best Market: This piece is best for companies marketing to on-the-go clients, and works well for corporate outings with its technologically-friendly features.



WINNER:
Soft Shell Jacket (5350)
Supplier: Dri Duck
Traders (asi/50835)
Circle 131 on Free Info Card



▲ **1st Runner-Up:** Hybrid Softshell (19530/99530)
Supplier: Trimark Sportswear Group (asi/92122)
Circle 128 on Free Info Card



▲ **2nd Runner-Up:** Bonded Fleece Jacket (88681)
Decorator: Ash City (asi/37127)
Circle 92 on Free Info Card

BEST ECO PRODUCT

Background: With eco-friendly in mind, Ash City wanted to create a jacket for men and women that was both functional and trendy. Combining embossed fabric and style lines made to flatter the silhouette, the TEMPO jacket was born. "We were able to offer a jacket that not only stood out but also utilizes mesh lining and underarm vents for added breathability, comfort and functionality," says Elson Yeung, product line manager at Ash City.

Best Feature: The jacket was designed to complement the eco-friendly TEMPO performance polo (85112/75112) by matching the style, colors, use of recycled polyester and the visual textures of each item.

Best Market: Companies who specialize in eco products and services are the immediate top choice. "This jacket would be a perfect fit for that consistent message," adds Yeung.



WINNER: Lightweight Jacket (88188)

Supplier: Ash City (asi/37127)

Circle 92 on Free Info Card

► **1st Runner-Up: Half-Zip Pullover (2520)**

Supplier: Storm Creek (asi/82588)

Circle 132 on Free Info Card



▲ **2nd Runner-Up: Long Hood (228)**

Supplier: Brandwear (asi/41545)

Circle 133 on Free Info Card

BEST OUTERWEAR

Background: The goal of the Ozark was to create a trend-setting jacket with the latest in modern styling and performance technology.

Best Feature: "This jacket has technical finishes that truly looks great and performs in the most challenging of climates," says Nadia Baggetta, digital marketing coordinator at Tri-mark.

Best Market: With the jacket's distinct appearance, and the high quality of thermal technology, corporate events and winter excursions are the best markets area for this piece.



WINNER: Thermal Reflective Jacket (19701/99701)

Supplier: Trimark Sportswear Group (asi/92122)

Circle 128 on Free Info Card



▲ **1st Runner-Up: Eclipse Jacket (5321)**

Supplier: Dri Duck Traders (asi/50835)

Circle 131 on Free Info Card



▲ **2nd Runner-Up: Gold-Trimmed Jacket (LB8123)**

Supplier: Tri-Mountain (asi/92125)

Circle 84 on Free Info Card

BEST TRENDY HAT

Background: This hat, from SanMar's District line, is made with personality. It's made with 100% acrylic fiber, adding warmth and functionality to the overall style of the piece.

Best Feature: The funky styling of this hat is sure to be a hit. The cat ears are small and not overstated to keep the beanie fun but fashionable.

Best Market: The hat would do well in nearly any market as a novelty gift, or as part of a unique branding campaign, but fits best with any company who markets toward youth and young adults.



WINNER: Cat-Eared Beanie (DT626)
Supplier: SanMar (asi/84863)

Circle 86 on Free Info Card



1st Runner-Up: Ponytail Cap (91)

Supplier: Brandwear (asi/41545)

Circle 133 on Free Info Card

2nd Runner-Up: Recreation Beanie (223834)

Supplier: Holloway Sportswear (asi/61430)

Circle 134 on Free Info Card



BEST LADIES' KNIT

Background: The Boyfriend cardigan was designed for work casual. "I wanted to add a cardigan to the line that would be appropriate from desk to dinner," says Jennifer Tsai, VP of operations at Tri-Mountain. Keeping the style classic, the fabric has a hint of sparkle for a dressier touch that doesn't get overstated.

Best Feature: The shimmering look of the fabric in a longer length gives the piece a flattering, elegant look.

Best Market: With its stylish look and complete functionality, this piece will sell best in the corporate market.



WINNER (tie): Boyfriend Cardigan (LB928)

Supplier: Tri-Mountain (asi/92125)

Circle 84 on Free Info Card

WINNER (tie): Junior's Hoodie (229327)

Supplier: Holloway Sportswear (asi/61430)

Circle 134 on Free Info Card



Background: The merchandising team at Holloway researched current trends, evaluated what they presently offered and then applied customer feedback. The result was the design of the lightweight Junior hoodie, made with a tri-blend, heathered fabric.

Best Feature: With top trends in mind, the hoodie was made longer in the sleeves and body, giving it a lean, slimming look.

Best Market: This piece is most suitable for companies who deal in sports and fan-based products. "This is a great spiritwear piece that can be decorated easily," adds Jennifer Nixon, marketing manager for Holloway.

1st Runner-Up: Quarter-Zip Jacket (97894)

Supplier: Trimark Sportswear Group (asi/92122)

Circle 128 on Free Info Card



BEST T-SHIRT DECORATION

Background: It was key to know that the client was planning to use this design for a sales convention. "We knew there was a tagline to include as well as the company logo," says Mima Cavan, marketing manager at T-Shirt Tycoon. The lenticular print was chosen as the most cost-effective choice with high quality in mind. **Best Feature:** Lenticular printing is both attention-grabbing and cost effective.

Best Market: This decoration is best for companies that have a strong iconic mark and a written tagline. Cavan cites McDonalds with its famous arches and catchy "I'm lovin' it" tagline.



WINNER:
Lenticular Print
Supplier: T-shirt
Tycoon Solutions
(asi/87000)
Circle 135 on
Free Info Card



▲ **1st Runner-Up (tie):**
Cowboy Crawl Mud Run
Supplier: Blue Monster
Promotions (asi/466761)
Circle 136 on Free Info Card



► **1st Runner-Up (tie):**
TGI Fridays
Supplier: In Your Face
Apparel (asi/62494)
Circle 77 on Free Info Card

BEST PERFORMANCE/ATHLETIC GARMENT

Background: Designed to be a fully functional mid-weight jacket, the Sitka came to be with the goal of being a well-rounded piece, fitting for any active event.

Best Feature: The combination of bonded breathable fabrics and engineered welded mesh panels that are strategically positioned throughout set this jacket apart in performance. "Reflective films and layered effects that incorporate laser and transfer technology result in an impactful and highly visual logo," says Digital Marketing Coordinator Nadia Baggetta.

Best Market: This jacket is best suited to venues specializing in a variety of high-activity sports and events.



▲ **1st Runner-Up:**
Melange Tech Tee (2656)
Supplier: Vantage Apparel (asi/93390)
Circle 105 on Free Info Card



▲ **2nd Runner-Up:**
Crossover Jacket (229138)
Supplier: Holloway Sportswear (asi/61430)
Circle 134 on Free Info Card



WINNER: Softshell Jacket (19530)
Supplier: Trimark Sportswear Group (asi/92122)
Circle 128 on Free Info Card

BEST POLO

Background: The Laser polo was designed to be a piece full of detail with highly technical features.

Best Feature: This polo is made for mobility, as it features extreme performance nylon-spandex blend with a micro piqué construction along with a laser-cut, bonded frame and sleeve detailing.

Best Market: "Polos are a versatile item that translates well into many markets," says Jeff Silcock, marketing manager at Stormtech. The Laser polo stands out with its attention to detail design and will do well with clients looking for a unique and technical polo design.



WINNER:
Laser Polo

Supplier:
Stormtech
(asi/89864)
Circle 130 on
Free Info Card



◀ **1st Runner-Up:**
Micro Stripe Polo (OG119)
Supplier: SanMar (asi/84863)
Circle 86 on Free Info Card

▶ **2nd Runner-Up:**
Fusion Polo
Supplier: Holloway
Sportswear (asi/61430)
Circle 134 on Free Info Card



BEST UNIFORM PROGRAM

Background: Originally launched in the spring of 2011, the Blitz men's polo and Lady Blitz women's polo items were the stepping stone of these pieces. Their popularity inspired the Tri-Mountain team to build a series of styles which would eventually lead to the Blitz uniform.

Best Feature: "The design is simple and clean, but at the same time, it's eye-catching," says Danny Tsai, VP of merchandising. Add in the 27 color combinations and wide range of sizes available that go up to a 6XL, and this uniform combo is able to meet the needs of any client.

Best Market: The items' versatility makes it relevant to any market that deals in sports, or sport-related events.



WINNER:
Blitz Uniform
(J1450 Blitz LWJ,
145 Blitz, K145CN
Blitz)

Supplier:
Tri-Mountain
(asi/92125)
Circle 84 on
Free Info Card



◀ **1st Runner-Up:**
SleepCountry Uniform
(4010, 1110, AW 009)
Supplier: Brandwear
(asi/41545)
Circle 133 on Free Info Card

▶ **2nd Runner-Up:**
Sports Uniform
Supplier: Stahls' ID
Direct (asi/88984)
Circle 123 on Free Info Card



BEST WOVEN/BLOUSE

Background: The proliferation of checked pattern dress shirts gave rise to this subtle-but-colorful option from SanMar's Red House line. With added details such as the enhanced, non-iron finish, the piece works well in and out of the office for a well-dressed look.

Best Feature: It offers modern styling with open-collar stays, single needle tailoring and a slim fit.

Best Market: Made for easy maintenance, this shirt is ideal for corporate markets.



WINNER: Checkered Cotton Shirt (RH74)

Supplier: SanMar (asi/84863)

Circle 86 on Free Info Card



▲1st Runner-Up: Satin Blouse (LB734)

Supplier: Tri-Mountain (asi/92125)

Circle 84 on Free Info Card



▲2nd Runner-Up: Tattersall Shirt (MCW01891)

Supplier: Cutter & Buck (asi/47965)

Circle 85 on Free Info Card

How the Winners Were Chosen

In August, *Wearables* first asked for apparel and accessory submissions from suppliers, decorators and distributors. Finalists were selected by the *Wearables* editorial team, judging the products on design appeal, wearability, performance attributes and look. Using the same criteria, our readers then voted on the finalists to determine the winner in each category. A total of 902 readers casted votes.

SCREEN-PRINTING SUCCESS



FAST SCREENING

Computer-to-screen systems save money and time for decorations.

BY EILEEN FRITSCH

Every growth-minded garment producer eventually asks: How can we screen print greater quantities of T-shirts better, faster and cheaper?

Faster presses are an obvious part of the equation. But the total number of sellable shirts produced decreases each hour your press sits idle while screens are laboriously prepared.

To keep presses running with a greater variety of jobs, many mid-size to large screen-printing shops now use computer-to-screen (CTS) systems. Advances in industrial inkjet printheads have led to improvements in resolutions, speeds and reliability and enabled some exciting innovations that make these systems a worthwhile option for busy decorators.

Breaking Free of Film

A computer-to-screen (or direct-to-screen) system eliminates film costs and several processing steps associated with manual screen-making. Traditionally, a wide-format inkjet

printer uses UV-blocking black ink and RIP software to output a digitally created image onto translucent vellum or an inkjet-receptive clear film. This film positive is then taped on a screen that has been coated with an emulsion. When the film and screen are placed in a UV exposure unit, the emulsion hardens everywhere on the screen that isn't blocked by the opaque image on the film. After the screen is washed to remove non-hardened emulsion, the screen is dried and loaded onto the press. The ink only flows through the screen mesh where image on the film had prevented light from reacting with the emulsion.

A CTS system uses RIP software to print an image file directly onto the emulsion-coated screen. The screen must still be exposed, washed, and mounted on the press. But you don't have to buy film, wait for printed films to dry, or store the films for possible reprints in the future. So in addition to saving money on film, a CTS system can improve image quality, decrease exposure time and provide precise registration of screens for multi-color jobs.

Cheat Sheet

Here are some questions to help you choose a system that is right for your shop.

- What size screens can I use with this device?
- How fast does this device print?
- How much does it cost to image each screen?
- What type of training do you offer? When you send someone to train new operators, does the trainer know how to make screens?
- What type of RIP software is included? Is a computer included to run the RIP? (Some companies include computers to make it easier to troubleshoot system-operation problems.)
- How much do the inks cost?
- What type of printhead does this CTS use? How much does it cost to replace a printhead?
- What type of warranty is provided?

Time Savers

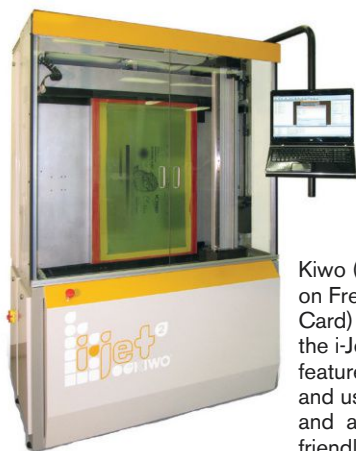
Three years ago Jack Lipomi, president of Apple Imprints Apparel, made an investment that really changed the way his screen printing shop prepped screens.

Like most screen printers, his shop had previously relied on film positives and all the traditional steps of screen making: using emulsions, adjusting and taping screens, measuring and checking for exact registration, rinsing the screens after exposure and so on. The whole process required multiple steps and great care.

Now with the Kiwo i-Jet, Lipomi simply sends the prepared art file to his computer, which guides the i-Jet. Screens are inserted into the i-Jet machine, which has a fail-proof registration guide. Then i-Jet uses a high detail nozzle to spray hot black wax according to the art file instructions. "You can set up jobs in minutes," Lipomi says. "The i-Jet tool took away all of the time required to make film positives." He estimates that it has cut his prep time in half and created significant savings on traditional film and more. Even better, each job is aligned in perfect registration with better overall image quality.

Lipomi recognized the CTS system was making a big difference, but he didn't realize what a time saver it was until the decorator's i-Jet went down for maintenance. In the downtime, Lipomi's team had to go back to the traditional film positive process. "It was painstaking for us," he says. Now Apple Imprints Apparel has two Kiwo i-Jets, ensuring no such inconvenience in the future.

— Tonia Kimbrough



Kiwo (circle 88 on Free Info Card) now has the i-Jet 2, which features plug-in and use design and a user-friendly interface.

These systems have been commercially available since the 1990s, and have been upgraded in numerous ways, including unique light technologies and inkjet printheads (typically from Ricoh or Spectra) specifically designed for industrial-use printers. But the biggest distinction among machines today is the ink type: Inkjet wax and water-based ink.

Inkjet wax/phase change systems use a high-density, thermal-wax ink that is heated before it is jetted onto the screen. The melted wax inks dry faster than water-based inks and adhere to a variety of substrates, even when printing vertically on screens. (The space-saving advantages of vertical printing are especially beneficial in making screens for super-large graphics.) "The density from a wax ink CTS system is much higher than liquid ink or toner on film," contends Phillip Wanzong, product manager of Exile Technologies. "This allows wax ink printers such as the Spyder to hold finer detail and ensure that exposure times are high enough to keep emulsions from breaking down too early on press."

Potential drawbacks of inkjet wax systems include the risk of printhead damage from repeated heating and cooling cycles and more expensive inks. It also takes time for a wax-ink unit to start-up from a cold condition. Keeping the system in a standby mode will keep the ink in a liquid phase.

Water-based ink systems can jet ultra-small droplets of high-density dye inks directly onto the screen. CTS systems that use water-based inks may be less costly to operate over the long run. Water-based inks cost less, the overall print speed of the machines is faster and the printheads last substantially longer. On the other hand, water-based inks can take longer to dry.

Cost Analysis

Because CTS systems range in price from \$40,000 to \$100,000, the first reaction some shop owners have is: "Gee, that's pretty expensive. I hope I can afford one someday." But if you talk to shop owners who use CTS systems, they say, "Why didn't I get one sooner?"

The return on investment in a CTS system depends on variables such as the number of screens produced, labor costs, types of materi-

als used and the proficiency of your employees. Shops that produce upwards of 25 to 30 screens a day can achieve significant savings in film costs alone.

Geoff Baxter, director of the Digital Products Division at the M&R Companies, estimates that a shop that produces 6,500 screens a year (about 25 per day) can save at least \$12,350 year. This is based on an average film cost of \$2.00 per screen (\$13,000) and ink costs of \$0.10 per screen (\$650). This \$12,000-plus in film savings doesn't even include other factors such as the ink costs to print on the films or the labor costs associated with mounting films or archiving them for reprints in the future. If films pick up dust from glass in the exposure unit, you may also have to retouch pinholes on exposed screens.

The website of Lawson Screen & Digital Products includes a formula you can use to estimate the potential savings of using the company's Express-Jet CTS device. For example, for each screen produced, Lawson estimates their CTS system will save two minutes on film-to-screen alignment, one minute of exposure time, two minutes of retouching, and five minutes of on-press registration.

If the labor costs in your shop are \$25.00 an hour and you save 10 minutes per screen, then your labor costs are \$4.20 per screen. In a shop that produces 25 screens a day (6,500 screens per year), this adds up to \$27,300 in labor savings per year.

You can also expect improvements in image quality with a CTS system, particularly if your shop prints a lot of multicolor shirts. Because image placement on the screens is computer-controlled, you get more precise registration when making and loading multiple screens. Exposure times are also faster and produce better results because you don't need a pane of glass to keep the film positioned on the screen.

"You don't have to use a specialized exposure unit (such as the LED-5000 Vertical) with a CTS system, but there are benefits if you do," says David Landesman, co-president of Lawson Screen & Digital Products. "You can get a much better, more accurate print resolution on the screen if the light doesn't pass through glass and film first." He says

“If you are concerned with efficiency, material and labor savings, and produce more than 25 screens a day, a computer-to-screen system definitely merits investigation.”

David Landesman, Lawson Screen & Digital Products

clients who hadn't been able to hold a 5% dot when printing on film are “now capable of holding 2 or 3% highlight dots when using the ExpressJet CTS.”

(There is an ongoing technical debate about whether a wax-ink or liquid-ink system holds a more accurate dot. But both wax inks and water inks can produce the level of image quality the garment producers require.)

Screen printers who use CTS systems say the systems aren't difficult to operate, because you are not actually manipulating the file supplied by the art department. Ray Matukewicz, owner of Tukes Printing in Tremont, PA, makes between 110 and 120 screens day. Learning to use the Spyder CTS system from Exile Technologies wasn't difficult for him. “If you can print films,” he says, “you can use a CTS system.” The main advice he offers is to know who you are buying the system from and to make sure they provide great support: “Your business depends on the machine, so you can't afford to have it down. When you call support, you need to be able to get support.”

Because your shop will quickly grow to depend on the CTS system, it's very important to buy from a well-established company that offers quick and reliable service.

“Pay attention to your trainer and write down everything they tell you,” says Matt Scott, a prepress operator for B&E Industries in Grand Prairie, TX. He has been using an Exile Spyder CTS for about a year in a shop that produces about 100 screens a day. He says using a CTS system “has greatly improved the amount of work I can put out with a lot fewer issues.” He is careful to purge the wax ink lines after the CTS system has been on standby, then produces batches of

screens for jobs scheduled later in the week.

High-Volume Efficiency

CTS systems make a lot of sense for shops that want to merge the efficiencies of digital imaging with the cost advantages of higher-volume screen printing. The equipment manufacturers offer a range of models to meet a range of print speeds and screen-size requirements. The fastest models can process as many as 350 screens per shift.

And equipment companies are continuing to innovate with this product. At the 2013 SGIA Expo, M&R showcased a CTS system that streamlines the screen-making process even further. M&R's I-Image-STE model has a built-in UV-LED exposure unit that eliminates the need for a separate exposure unit. On the inward pass of the machine, the i-Image STE prints the images on the emulsion-coated screens. On the outward pass, a built-in high-output UV LED light exposes the imaged screens.

If your shop needs versatility in screen sizes, the master-frame carrier on the Lawson Express-Jet easily adjusts to fit multiple frame sizes and profiles. This spring, Lawson Screen & Digital Products plans to unveil an entry-level, industrial-duty CTS system priced in the \$15,000 range for shops that may not use jumbo screens for automatic presses and produce up to 75 screens per day.

“There is little doubt that CTS systems are the wave of the future,” says Landesman. “If you are concerned with efficiency, material and labor savings, and produce more than 25 screens a day, a computer-to-screen system definitely merits investigation.”

Eileen Fritsch is a contributing writer for Wearables.

Thinking Small with CTS



Screen-printing newcomers who manually print small quantities of one-color prints, T-shirts or bags might be interested in RISO's GOCCOPRO 100, a compact CTS unit that eliminates the need for chemicals, emulsions, film positives, exposure units and washout booths.

The GOCCOPRO 100 is “a digital screen maker that uses thermal print-head technology to expose a specialized, heat-sensitive screen master,” says Riso's Noriko Komoto. “Once the artwork is created on the screen, the GOC-COPRO 100 rolls the screen master to the specified, customizable frame size and cuts the piece off the master roll.” Users then stretch the screen on the frame and are ready to print. A washout booth isn't needed because there is no residual emulsion to remove and the screens are disposable.

The entire computer, a GOC-COPRO and a frame fit on a six-foot long table. XpresScreen (asi/14703; circle 99 free Info Card) sells it in the U.S. for around \$9,500. Each screen master roll is 40-feet long and makes about 30 screens for 13 x16-inch frames. The cost of each roll depends on the mesh count (70, 120, 180 or 200). It takes about 100 seconds to produce a screen for a 13 x16-inch frame, meaning you can take a design from your computer to a T-shirt in about five minutes.

At the Imprinted Sportswear Show in Long Beach, RISO unveiled a flatbed model that can image a larger area on pre-stretched screens, making it easier to produce multi-color jobs.

Alstyle.

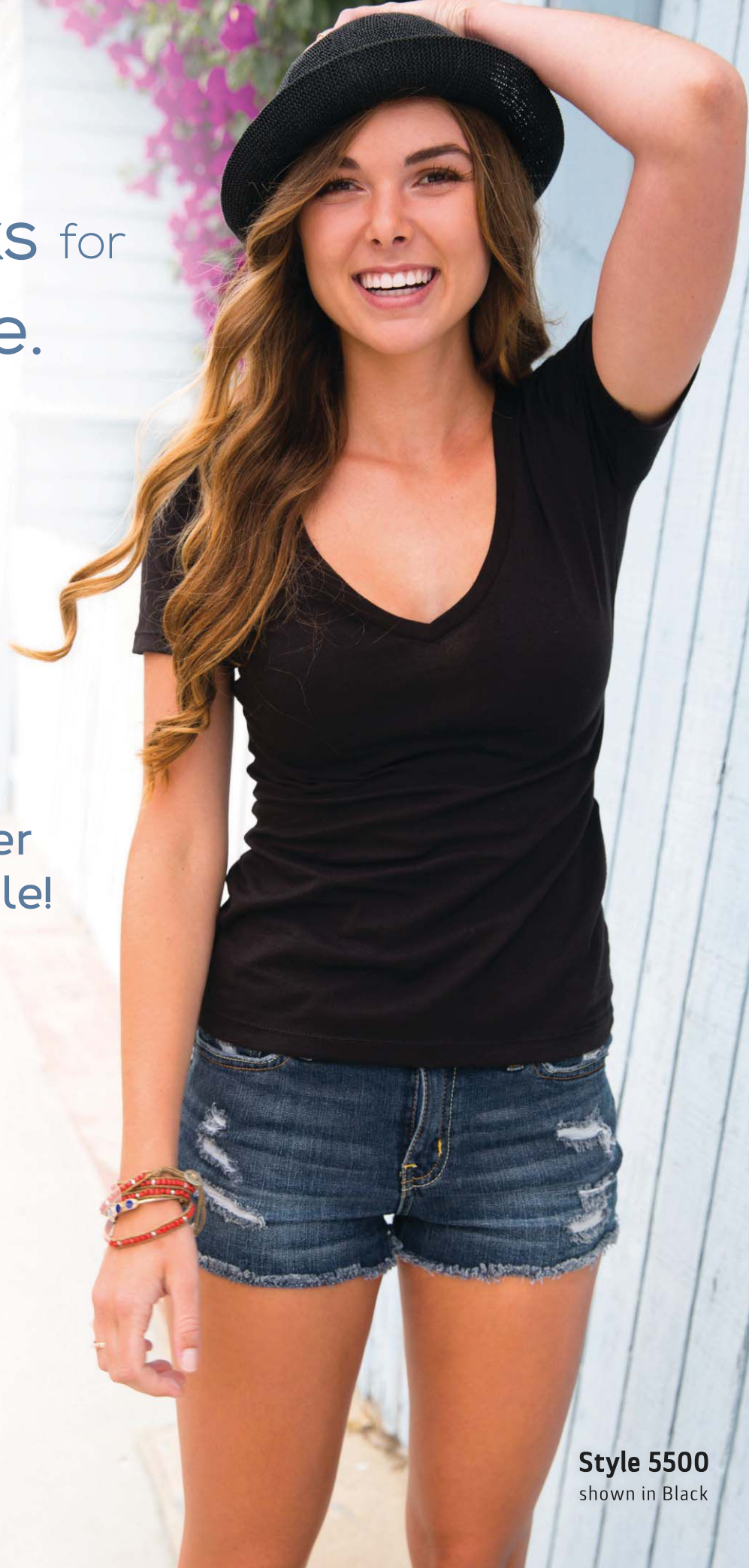
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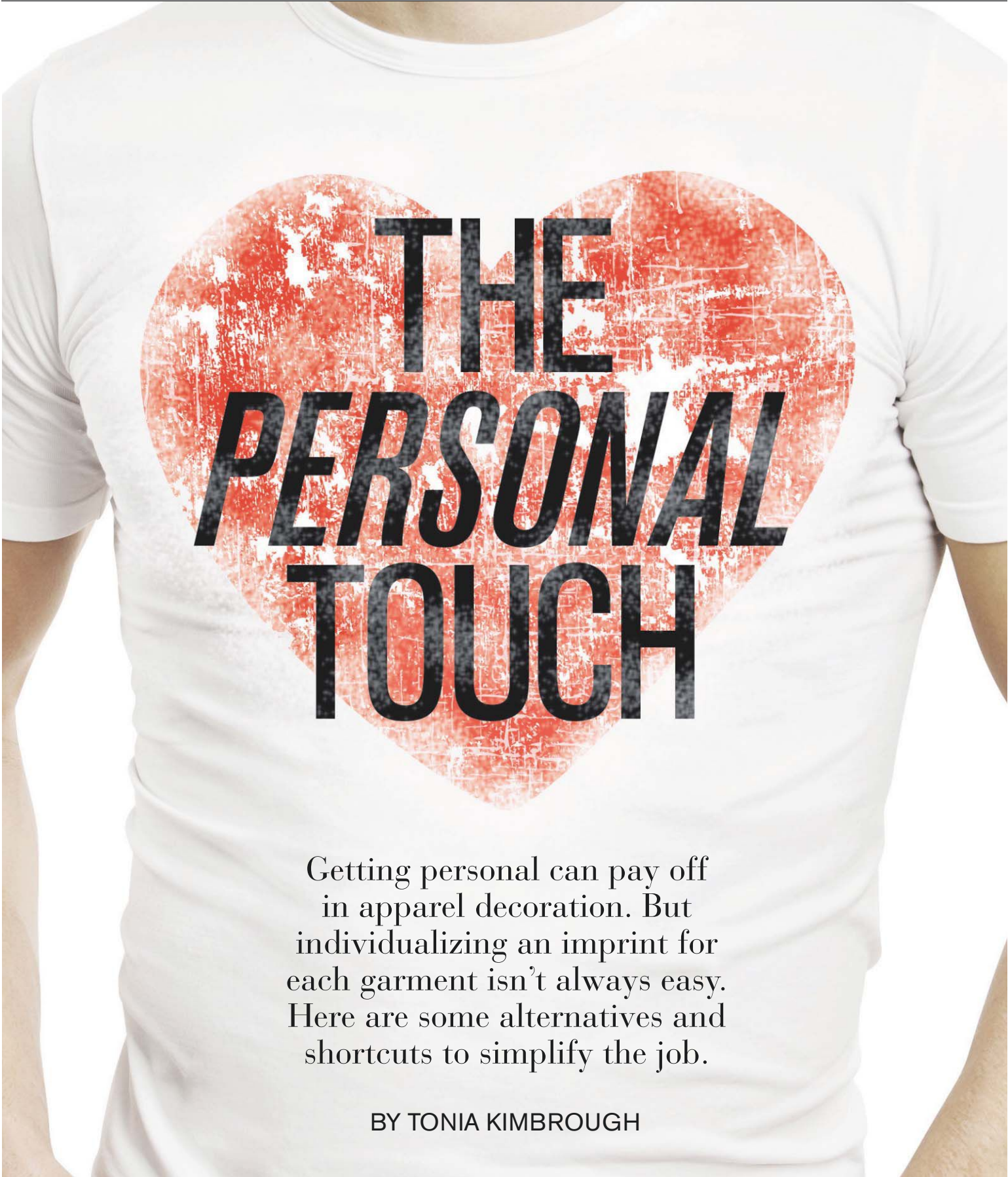
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THE *PERSONAL* TOUCH

Getting personal can pay off in apparel decoration. But individualizing an imprint for each garment isn't always easy. Here are some alternatives and shortcuts to simplify the job.

BY TONIA KIMBROUGH

Adding a name or monogram to a shirt or jacket may seem expensive when compared to a generic imprint. Why hamper productivity by constantly swapping out screens and letters when it's so much easier to simply mass-produce the same logo? In reality, personalization elevates a garment's perceived value in the eyes of a recipient, making it more likely to be kept and worn with frequency and, therefore, worth the investment. In addition, equipment companies are coming up with myriad ways for decorators to add a personalized touch without slowing their production to a crawl.

There is not a single segment that does not utilize personalization," says Ed Levy, director of software technology at Hirsch International (asi/14982). "Everything from corporate events to retail items to childrenswear can be personalized." Any number of markets, including the top two from the latest *Wearables Sales Forecast* (education and associations/clubs) can benefit from personalized decoration for identification or gift giving.

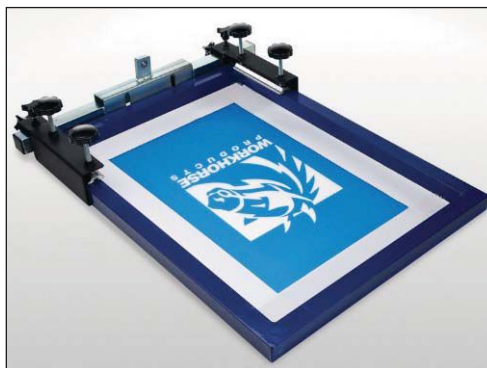
It's no surprise that in screen printing and across decorating mediums there is a push to make personalization easier.

Screen Printing

Screen printing may be one of the more challenging processes for personalization for a simple reason – it's costly and time-intensive to constantly switch screens for personalized prints. But there are options for screen printers. First, numbering systems can simplify screen printing team numbers on individual jerseys. The DiGiT Numbering System from Vastex, for example, allows you to print consecutive numbers as quickly as regular spot printing. The DiGiT Slide locates each number for speed and precision. An easy-to-see sight rail with a yellow target makes registration a snap. The system claims to number up to 120 shirts per hour.

Another option is to name drop. "For example, if you have an order for a Hard Rock T-shirt design and the client wants

to drop in the names of different city locations, you can use a side clamp," says Tyler Dummett, president of Workhorse Products. "Typically, you fasten your screen at the bottom of the frame, or at the back. This limits you in terms of forward and backward motion. You can only move the screen from side to side. When you use a side clamp that fastens to the side of the screen's frame, you can then slide the screen up or down with ease. After you print one city name, you can loosen the side clamp and move up or down the screen to print the next city location." The process would be to first screen print the common design, cure it, and after it is cured, go back to screen print individual names using the side clamp.



Screen printers can use accessories for their presses to add personalization. A side clamp (top) allows the screen to be slid up and down to position an additional name. The Vacu-Pallet (above) holds letters and numbers in place without an adhesive, which can then be cut out and heat-pressed. Both available from Workhorse Products (circle 122 on Free Info Card).

Photos courtesy of Workhorse Products

In addition, decorators can use screen printing on a heat press application with screen-printed transfers. (With these types of transfers, the images are screen printed on transfer paper and then heat applied to a garment.) To create transfers yourself, Dummett suggests using a Vacu-Pallet for screen printing stock letters or numbers, which can then be cut out and heat-pressed to the shirt when an order comes up that needs personalization. Alternatively, screen printers can order heat transfers to personalize garments from companies like Stahls' ID Direct (asi/88984) or Transfer Express (asi/91804).

Heat Press

A heat press allows decorators to combine screen printing with personalization in a complementary way. Stahls' offers a variety of heat transfer materials that enable a wide range of substrates to be personalized. For example, a cheer squad may have sweatshirts personalized with individual names using a Glitter Flake transfer material and then complete the personalized uniform by adding names to each member's shoes using Stahls' Fashion Film and Fashion Film Electric.

"Heat-applied materials, Fashion Film included, offer a mixed-media look when used with other decorating methods. It's an easy and quick way to personalize a shoe or garment," says Andrea Pietrowsky, marketing and communications specialist at Stahls' ID Direct. "Decorating with heat-applied materials offers an on-demand approach. Whether you order pre-cut letters or numbers, or cut your own, it's a clean, mess-free method of decorating. Fashion Film is easy to cut and weed, making it perfect for intricate or small designs. It's a hot-peel application, so there's no downtime while waiting for it to cool before peeling, making it even faster."

Fashion Film extends to items like footwear, a product category where decorators traditionally had little recourse. Josh Ellsworth, general manager of Stahls' CAD CUT Direct, explains why Fashion Film in particular is the ideal choice for shoe personalization:

1. The thin material has a minimal edge, which helps the transfer to be durable, espe-

cially in sports applications.

2. A very sticky backing on the carrier allows for the finest of details, which are often needed when decorating shoes.

3. It is easily applied. The carrier is a super-hot peel release and allows for fast and easy application on a wide variety of material types.

4. A variety of finishes are available. Neons and metallic-like finishes are popular in footwear. Fashion Film and Fashion Film Electric have a lot of shades available that coordinate well.

You can further streamline the process of heat-applying names and numbers with



Use heat transfers to personalize everything from jerseys to shoes. Fashion Film from Stahls' ID Direct (asi/88984; circle 123 on Free Info Card) is an easy and fast way to create a personalized uniform and much more.

Photo courtesy of Stahls' ID Direct (asi/88984)

pre-prepped letters and digits. For example, the new pre-spaced permanent twill player and team names from Dalco Athletic enable you to apply names to shirts with one fast, easy placement. A pressure-sensitive adhesive backing keeps the name in place while applying. No sewing is required. Pre-spaced player and team names can be ordered in full-block or plain-block fonts, in the most popular athletic and school colors. The maximum length for adult names is 14 inches and for youth names is 12 inches.

Embroidery

With initials, monograms, names and more, decorators can always turn to embroidery. Demand is driving technologies that enable embroiders to multitask and set up designs while on the move, therefore improving their productivity. "Personalization has become hip once again. Many companies that offer personalization services have experienced explosive growth," Levy says. To help decorators meet that demand, Hirsch recently introduced the new Tajima Sidekick by Pulse. The tablet-based software solution works with Tajima embroidery machines. With Sidekick, users can create text, set up designs and manage machines directly from an Android tablet.

Sidekick offers a simple user interface to design lettering from various font packages. It includes a straightforward touchscreen interface that allows you to select options from a drop-down menu and customize text with a selection of fonts, colors, sizes and more. It's easy to input a name into the software and instruct the embroidery machine to stitch the name in a separate location once it is finished with the main logo. Sidekick also saves time



The Sidekick by Pulse is tablet-based software solution that works with Tajima embroidery machines to incorporate personalization digitally. The software is available from Hirsch International (asi/14982; circle 124 on Free Info Card). Photo courtesy of Hirsch International (asi/14982).

and increases productivity by enabling you to set up designs in advance. It reduces machine downtime by allocating colors to the design. With Sidekick, you can prepare the next set of designs while your machine is still running, making it easier to ready changes for personalization.

"Sidekick is a minimal investment, yet it is very effective in adding a streamlined lettering process for embroidery without tying up a PC," Levy explains. Looking at the big picture, decorators can quickly reach a positive return on investment. "Personalization as a whole is very lucrative," Levy continues. "Stitch counts are often very low and personalizations command a premium price."

When individualizing garments is required, Drew Coufal of Sew & Sew Embroidery uses a personalization plugin

“Personalization has become hip once again. Many companies that offer personalization services have experienced explosive growth.”

— Ed Levy, Hirsch International (asi/14982)

by Wilcom EmbroideryStudio called “Team Names.” His client submits a list of names and/or initials in an Excel file that Coufal then imports into his embroidery software. “The initials needed for the order get translated into a stitch file that we run at a machine level,” Coufal says.

“Our program will ‘stack’ names into single file and add stop code, so the machine will stop after each name. This can be adjusted, too, when a logo is involved, telling the machine to do the logo first, then come back and do the names. Most of the time, however, the names would be sent to machine as its



The PatchKit from Colman & Company (circle 125 on Free Info Card) allows for easy-to-create badges (top) and complex embroidered monograms.

Photos courtesy of Colman & Company

own file, not embedded with a logo, as it can be less efficient to run this way.”

Patches

If embroidery isn’t an option, you can always turn to a patch for individualized identification. Penn Emblem Company (asi/77120) specializes in ID solutions. Its Lettering Only Emblems professionally present a company or employee name in either script or block embroidered text. You can choose from a variety of standard badge shapes, sizes and thread/fabric colors to coordinate with organizational uniforms. These “dailies” are delivered within 24 hours of order placement – a quick and easy solution to welcome new hires. Or keep PennBrite blank patches on hand, allowing you to screen print, embroider or sublimite a personalized patch whenever the need arises. The badge can then be easily sewed or heat-sealed to the uniform.

Colman and Company offers a PatchKit that enables you to quickly create an attractive, personalized name badge from start to finish. “The PatchKit is a simple solution to a common problem for decoration shops and apparel businesses,” says Mark Stephenson, director of sales and marketing at Colman and Company. “What to say when a customer asks for 40, 20 or even five embroidered patches for uniforms, event wear or personalized gifts?” The PatchKit includes: one to two yards of 100% polyester twill type material, available in a wide variety of colors; a roll of polyester glue for adhering the patch onto a garment with a heat press or iron; and a heat knife, which is designed to “cut” around the edges of the patch. You simply hoop the patch material and stitch a shape and name on the fabric. You can then put the heat seal glue on the patch’s back using a heat press. Once the glue is fused to the back of the patch, you’ll cut out the patch with a heat knife, melting the polyester fabric and thread together. Once complete you can sew or heat-seal the patch to the garment being personalized.

“PatchKit customers put patches on everything from backpacks for school, uniforms for small companies and even full jacket-backs for riding clubs,” Stephenson



The new Epson SureColor F2000 White Edition and SureColor F2000 Standard Edition direct-to-garment printers are available from Equipment Zone (circle 145 on Free Info Card).

Photo courtesy of Equipment Zone

says. “Colman and Company also offers a CD of embroidered patch shapes, called PatchKit Borders, made to make creating your own patches even easier.”

Direct-to-Garment Printing

One off/low volume orders that feature personalization are where direct-to-garment printing can really pay off. Increasingly, decorators, screen printers and embroiderers are adding direct-to-garment printers as an effective solution for short runs or samples, even in full color. Because name changes are inserted digitally, it’s easy to constantly swap and change identifying information. Water-based inks are used, and no setup or screens are required, avoiding messy ink clean-up. Stephenson describes the process as a “print and see profit” approach.

Colman and Company offers DTG-branded digital printers. “Our DTG machines are ideal for fulfilling high-detail graphics and short-run orders,” Stephenson says, “meaning our printers can print one just as easily as printing 100 T-shirts. It’s ideal for a market where just one personalized item or sample might be a requirement.”

Whether the investment is right for your operation or not depends on how important personalization is to your clients. Evaluate demand before choosing a personalization solution. With as many approaches as there are techniques, you can find an option best suited to your client base.

Tonia Kimbrough is a contributing writer for Wearables.

HOW-TO

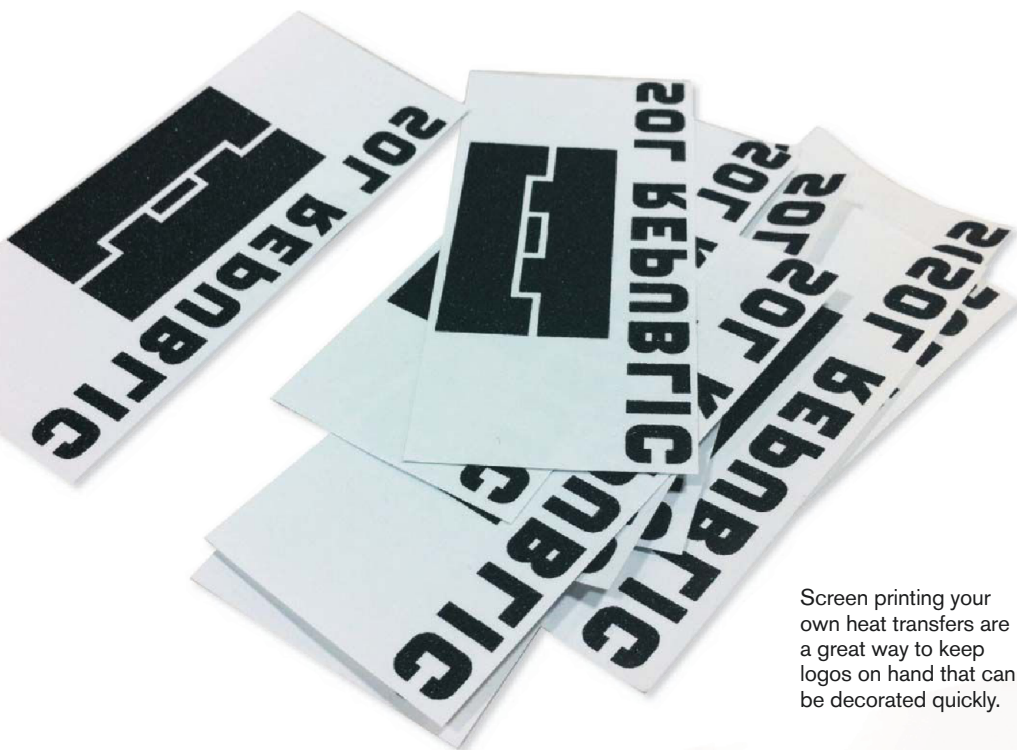
Printing In-House Heat Transfers

BY MARSHALL ATKINSON

There are many reasons why using heat transfers to decorate garments is a go-to technique by top decoration shops around the world. For example they can be used to add custom neck labels, decorate on high-tech material, add an image to a difficult to print fabric or lend a smoother or more sophisticated hand feel to the print. Many companies use heat transfers to have client's logos on-hand for quick turns for online company stores or programs. This allows for lower operating costs for decorating smaller or quicker turn-times. As you can have a large batch of transfers pre-made, decorating on the fly becomes much easier than setting up screens and printing the items individually.

There are many excellent options for sourcing pre-made transfers, but for many shops printing them in-house saves money, helps with faster turn-around times and keeps quality control in check. The transfers can be made with any Pantone color, and you can even experiment with additives such as stretch to apply transfers to more types of fabrics. Your shop may already have the right equipment, so why not learn this skill to add to your sales mix?

Heat transfers are great for logos or images that are simple (one to six colors) and can be made to be applied to any color garment. These will be printed with the same plastisol ink that you normally use, but instead of printing on a shirt or hat first, you will be printing on a special paper. (Tul-lis transfer paper comes recommended; it



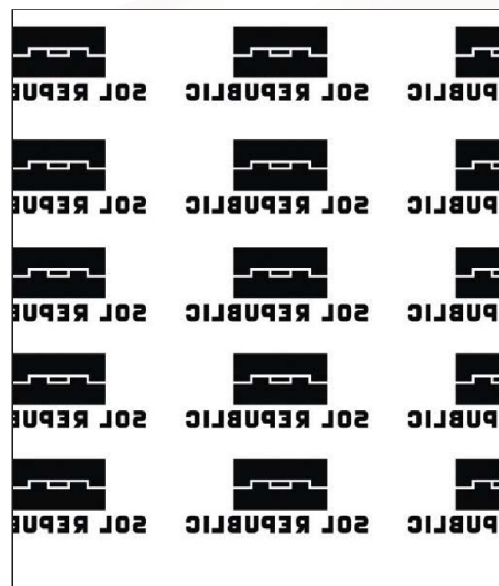
Screen printing your own heat transfers are a great way to keep logos on hand that can be decorated quickly.



Step 1

should be available from your supply chain partner.) This paper has a special heat-sensitive coating that releases the ink when applied with the heat press later in the process. Your art department can arrange a series of logos to fill up the paper print area, and then after it is printed the paper can be cut down to individual transfers. These are usually arranged in rows and columns to be quickly cut down later (Step 1). This is great, as it really adds to the efficiency of the process. If one edition of the print has 20 logos on the sheet, then you only need to print five sheets to have 100 transfers made. (A good tip to print several sheets more than you need, as paper is cheap and you will have extras already made for reorders. Just cut them down and store them flat in a labeled envelope.)

To get started, have your art department size and arrange the images correctly as



Step 2

needed for the job. You can use the same screens and mesh that you would normally use if you were printing on a shirt. However, you need to print these in reverse so that they can be applied to the garment to show up correctly. (Printing the transfer as normal will cause it to be reversed when it is transferred to the garment). As such, your art staff needs to remember to set these up as mirror images of the file (Step 2).

Now comes the fun part, printing. Here are the steps:

Prepare the Press: Check to see that the file is a mirror image of the final appearance, and then register your screens on press as normal (Step 3). For a manual printer, remember to apply each color in reverse as they normally would go down on the shirt. You can flash between colors, and the under-base color goes down last (Step 4).

Add Adhesive: After the image is printed, the sheet is then dusted with a fine adhesive powder (Step 5). Frame Fast White Stuff Adhesive Powder comes recommended. This is the trickiest part of the process as not enough powder will cause the transfer to not stick correctly to the garment. Too much powder causes the transfer to become rough, and you will see flecks of adhesive around the image (Step 6). A thin, even coat is what you want. Make sure you shake off any excess powder. (Step 7)

Dry The Transfer: After the adhesive powder is applied to the sheet, it is placed on your dryer belt like a shirt and sent down the dryer (Step 8). As you are using the same ink as you print normally, dryer temperature and speed do not need to be adjusted.

Trim Transfers: As mentioned previously, cut closely around the images so they are easier to apply to the final garment. You can use scissors or a guillotine trimmer (Step 9) which sometimes is faster if you have a lot of transfers to cut down.

Position Garment: Have your garments ready and apply the transfers to the garment individually. You will be using medium pres-



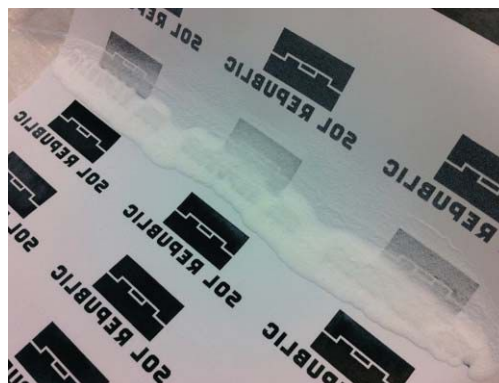
Step 3



Step 4



Step 5

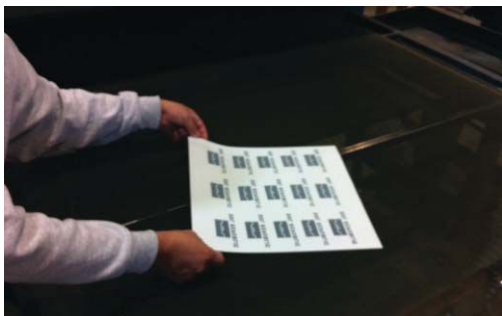


Step 6

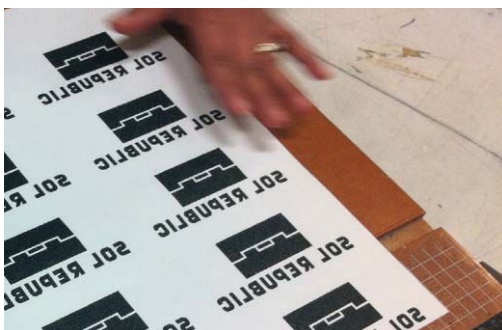


Step 7

“Heat transfers are great for logos or images that are simple (one to six colors) and can be made to be applied to any color garment.”



Step 8



Step 9



Step 11



Step 10



Step 12



Step 13

sure at 320 degrees of heat for 10 seconds for the press. This will be the same for any garment, as it's the transfer that dictates the heat and pressure, not the item. (Warning: Some items may be less tolerant to heat and pressure than others. You may want to experiment.) Make sure the heat transfer press is pre-heated, and then place the garment on the heat transfer platen, ensuring that it is straight and even with the edges of the platen (Step 10). Use a ruler or jig with the transfer to keep the transfer placement level, even and consistent throughout the print run for the order. For T-shirts, a thin silicone pad is layered on top of the transfer to protect the garment and produce a smooth finish. (Tip: when placing the silicone pad, be sure to do so carefully so that the transfer

doesn't move. Rolling the pad down similar to how you would apply a pie crust is the easiest method.)

Apply to Garment: If the transfer is placed correctly, pull down on the heat transfer press handle and apply the heat and pressure (Step 11). Once your timer sounds, release the pressure and pull the item off the press. This technique uses cold peel, so allow the garment to cool off and then remove the paper backing (Step 12). Voila! A successfully decorated item (Step 13)!

This technique takes some practice to do correctly, and time, temperature and pressure may need to be adjusted to fit different garments. You may need to experiment a little bit to dial in what works, and if you

change anything be sure to record what was successful in your system for the order so the instructions can be printed for the future jobs.

Marshall Atkinson is the Chief Operating Officer of Visual Impressions, Inc. (www.visualimp.com) and Ink to the People (www.inktothepople.com). He writes and speaks regularly on sustainability, efficiency, strategic planning, and apparel decorating operations. He serves on the Board of Directors for the Sustainable Green Printing Partnership (SGP – www.sgppartnership.org) and also on Leadership Committees for the Specialty Graphic Imaging Association (SGIA www.sgia.org). You can follow him on Twitter at [@atkinsontshirt.com](https://twitter.com/atkinsontshirt) or read his blog at <http://atkinsontshirt.com/>. Contact him at matkinson4804@gmail.com.

HOW-TO

Add a Glittery Touch to T-Shirts

BY TONIA KIMBROUGH

Multifaceted imprints – with multiple types of inks or different processes – require additional time and effort. However, the extra exertion is definitely worth it. Not only can the final result appear high end, but the customer will walk away suitably impressed.

Glittery screen prints are an excellent way to add a special touch to a normal decoration. Screen printers can achieve the layered look with specialty inks and the right prep work. Jack Lipomi, president of Apple Imprints Apparel, shares the steps required to create Apple's "Beautiful People" T-shirt.

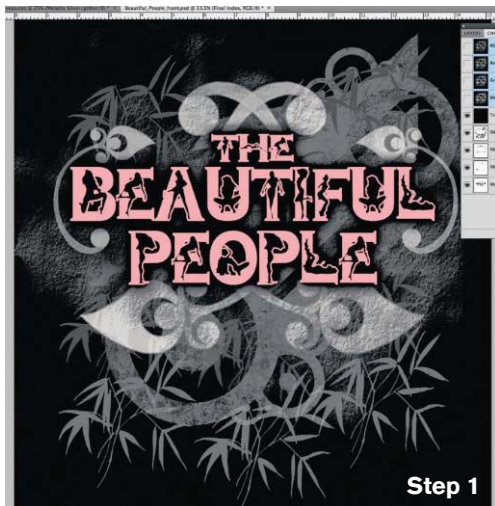
PREPRESS

Good artwork means high resolution. Clean-looking artwork is key for a good shirt design. Take the artwork into Photoshop and pull each individual color out, saving them as a channel rather than a layer (Step 1). This turns the image into a greyscale of highs and lows. For this artwork, we first took Cool Grey 9, which we use as our underbase. An underbase helps the colors in the design really pop.

Our next color channel will be Cool Grey 6 (middle grey), then Cool Grey 2 (lightest grey) and finally the glitter.



▲ This T-shirt screen printed by **Apple Imprints Apparel** (circle 136 on Free Info Card) shows how glitter can be added on for an impactful shirt design.



After each color is broken into separate channels, the file is saved and sent to a Kiwo iJet, which is a computer-to-screen imaging system using black wax to create the screen rather than the traditional film positive process using emulsion.

SCREENS

Each channel is then put on a separate screen. Each screen must be stretched to a minimum of 25 newtons. This means the screen is stretched tightly, allowing the ink to go through the mesh. For the glitter

screen, you want this one just as tight, if not tighter, than the rest because there needs to be room to allow the flakes of glitter to fit through the screen.

It is key to choose the correct screen mesh for each color being printed. A print file is sent to the press set-up people with instructions for inks, screens and mesh (Step 2). They will register the screens in press according to the sequence we listed on the sheet.

For the underbase (Cool Grey 9) we use a 200 mesh, which allows for a solid coat that will brighten up the colors to be printed



Step 2



Step 3



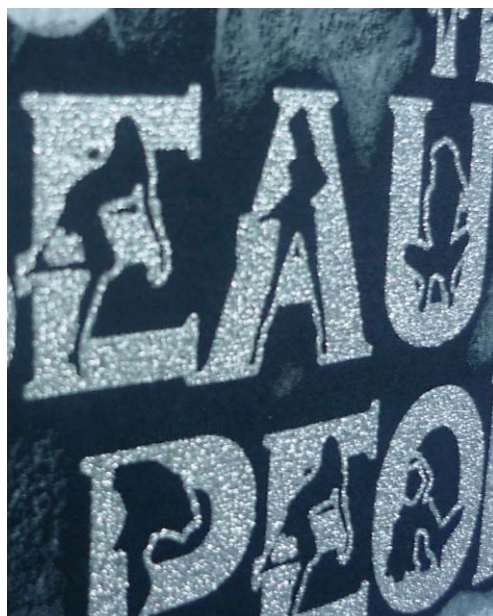
Step 4

“Big bold areas of the art will work best; glitter flake doesn’t work well for small details.”

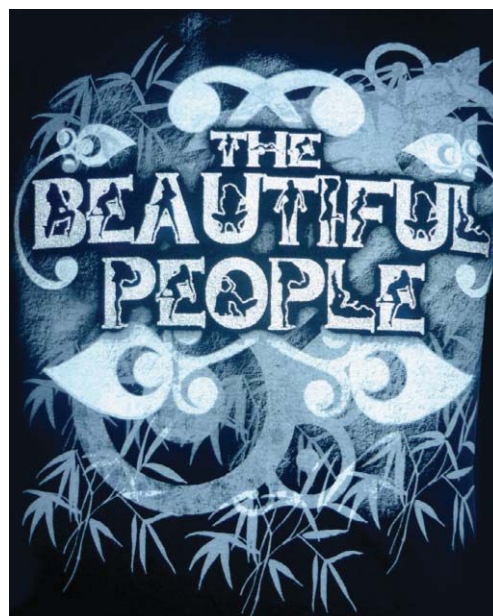
on top. For both the Cool Grey 6 and Cool Grey 2, we use 230 mesh. Finally, for the glitter we use a 32 mesh, which is extremely coarse, not unlike a screen door. This is what allows all the bigger flakes of glitter through the screen.

PRINTING

When we set up the screens, we must lay them down in the same order as the channels that were created back in Photoshop. In order to do this particular job automatically, you need an eight-color press because mul-



Step 5



Step 6

multiple flashes and cool down are required.

First the underbase (Cool Grey 9), then a flash to dry (Step 3).

Next, apply the Cool Grey 6 and then Cool Grey 2, followed by another flash (Step 4).

Finally, apply the glitter. The best way to apply glitter ink is direct print onto the shirt. Big bold areas of the art will work best; glitter flake doesn’t work well for small details. Another tip: Glitter flake

won’t leave a sharp edge so it’s always a good idea to border the flake ink with an area of solid color ink (Step 5).

Lastly you have to cure all the ink at no lower than 370 degrees for at least two-and-a-half minutes. The glitter and underbases need to bond to the shirt so that the shirt washes well once it gets in the hands of the customer (Step 6).

Tonia Kimbrough is a contributing writer for Wearables.

EQUIPMENT CORNER

The latest in machines and decoration products

PRESSES

KRUZER Manual Screen-Printing Press –M&R ▶

M&R (circle 113 on Free Info Card) offers the Kruzer, an entry-level manual screen printing press with tapered-roller-bearing-supported upper and lower carousels, a precise micro-registration system, machined center shaft and three-point pallet leveling system. The Kruzer manual press is offered in a 6-color/4-station model. Its unique lever-adjusted off-contact system operates vertically, eliminating the need for a separate angle adjustment. It's designed and disassembled to fit through a 78 cm (31") doorway. Side screen holders and solid aluminum, low-profile, rubber-coated pallets are standard.



PRINTERS



▲GT-3 Series Printer and Business Tools Pro – Brother and Inksoft

Inksoft (circle 138 on Free Info Card) has integrated its business tools program with the GT-3 series of direct-to-garment printers from Brother International Corporation (asi/12600; circle 139 on Free Info Card), resulting in greater accuracy and reduced time due to fewer steps and less handling of the graphic. Once a design created in Inksoft is approved and ready for production, it is sent to the Brother GT-3 direct-to-garment printer. When choosing "printing capabilities," the user can now select the Brother GT-3. The order is opened and the b icon is selected. This opens a dedicated browser to control the settings for that graphic. This new feature is available in all levels of Inksoft. In addition, for new GT-3 series customers, Brother is waiving the cost of Inksoft's Business Tools Pro.



◀Tagless Printer – InkCups Now

Create your own tagless prints with the B100 pad printer from InkCups Now (circle 137 on Free Info Card). The printer is part of the Inkcup Print system. The B100 is a heavy-duty benchtop system that can create

up to 2,000 impressions per hour, with just a 30-second changeover to a new graphic. It offers quick change capabilities with no additional tools required. The tags are touch dry immediately and garments can be stacked and packed right after printing. The tags last through 50 industrial wash tests and do not crack, shrink or damage fabric texture. The Inkcup Print system works for light and dark colors, for cotton, nylon, flock, fleece and ribbed textiles.

CLEANERS



▲Color Change Cleaner - Franmar

To meet the need for changing colors or opening clogged mesh areas during a screen-printing run, Franmar (circle 146 on Free Info Card) formulated this color change cleaner. It cleans as efficiently as chemicals such as Methylene Chloride without the negative safety and environmental impacts of such chemicals. Its economical capabilities allow for a quart to handle almost 35 standard textile screens. Color Change's super solvency and low odor allows for effective cleaning without the traditional solvent odors and VOC concerns. It is biodegradable and low odor.

INKS



▲SubliJet-E Pro Sublimation Inks – Sawgrass Technologies

Sawgrass Technologies (asi/316360; circle 140 on Free Info Card) now offers SubliJet-E Pro sublimation inks that are designed to work with Epson SureColor T-Series 7000 Printers. The printer is designed for producing all-over T-shirts and high-volume production of images up to 44" wide. The SubliJet-E's high capacity cartridges deliver extended uninterrupted printing and low imaging costs.

EQUIPMENT



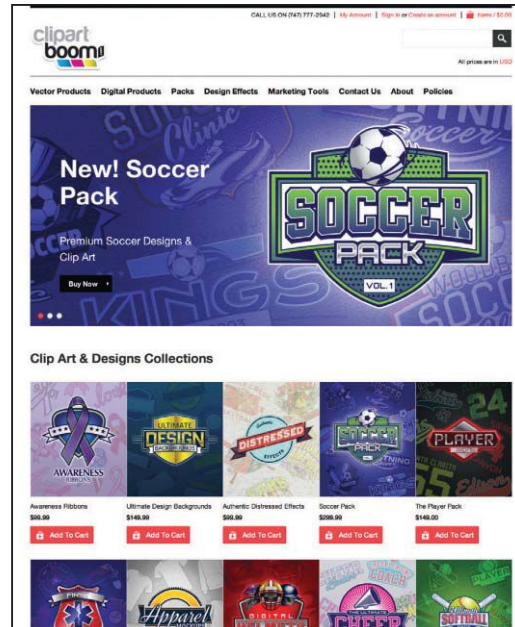
▲New Heat Press Shoe Platen – Hotronix

The new heat press shoe platen from Hotronix (circle 141 on Free Info Card) makes it possible to decorate a pair of shoes simultaneously and helps decorators gain access to the field of personalized footwear. The platen is compatible with Hotronix brand heat presses and is made in the USA.

IMAGES

►Vector and Digital Images – ClipArtBoom

ClipArtBoom (circle 142 on Free Info Card) offers vector and digital (raster) format images that can be used for screen printing, vinyl cutting, digital printing, print and cut, inkjet, laser digital transfer printers and more. From now until March 31 receive a free sample pack by using the coupon code FREEART at checkout. You can view the included clip art at <http://www.clipartboom.com/free-vector-clip-art/>.



TRANSFERS



▲ New Number Styles Added To Precut Lineup – Stahls' ID Direct

Stahls' ID Direct (asi/88984; circle 123 on Free Info Card) now offers 26 new styles to its line of pre-cut numbers. The new numbers will be available in a variety of heat transfer materials as well as the most popular sizes. To view all the new styles, visit stahls.com/pre-cut.

▼ Rhinestone Team Mascot Designs – Transfer Express

Transfer Express (asi/91804; circle 143 on Free Info Card) has added a full line of team mascot designs to its collection of stock rhinestone transfers. Transfers come in packages of five, and they can be adhered to 100% cotton, 100% polyester, or cotton/polyester blended fabrics. They are ideal for spirit wear, duffle bags, school backpacks, hoodies, caps and more.



◀ ThermoFlex Xtra – GSG

ThermoFlex Xtra from GSG (circle 144 on Free Info Card) is a cutter material developed specifically for use on nylon, leather, rayon and other surfaces where heat is an issue. It features a thick, pressure-sensitive polyester carrier sheet and a low-tack carrier adhesive that allows for easy repositioning, cutting and weeding. A durable, highly flexible polyurethane-based material, ThermoFlex Xtra is applied at relatively low temperatures (310-315), with a dwell time of three to five seconds, then cold peeled, covered with a Teflon sheet, and repressed for 10 seconds. It also can be used on some silicon-coated materials with sufficient surface texture to permit the adhesive to adhere. It is available in 16 colors, including Antique Silver and Old Gold.

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Put Your Hands Together

It was going to be an important trip. The Georgia Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society was headed to the state legislature on a mission to raise awareness about the debilitating disease that affects more than 8,500 residents of the Peach State. To help truly capture the attention of the public and officials while in Atlanta for MS Awareness Day, chapter leaders needed something extra special to stand out. For help, they turned to Michael Schnell, owner of Proforma Atlantic Gifts. "I knew that a standard shirt or hat wasn't going to do it," Schnell says. "We were going to have to get creative."

And creative he got. Schnell came up with the idea to accessorize the chapter leaders with mittens dyed bright orange, the MS Society's color of hope. Through brainstorming sessions, Schnell and his clients conceived of appliqueing the word "Cure" on the palm of the left mitten and "MS" on the palm of the right mitten. Designed this way, a simple yet resonant message was conveyed when wearers held

up the palms of both hands: "Cure MS."

The striking mittens had the desired effect, catching the eye of Georgia Governor Nathan Deal (pictured in suit), who later sported a pair when the group visited. What's more, people near the capitol building kept inquiring why the chapter leaders were wearing mittens, providing ample chances to discuss the MS Society's cause. "We utilize opportunities like this to educate more people about MS and the needs of people with the disease," says Kyle Pinion, director of public policy and advocacy for the society's Georgia chapter. "With the mittens, we were able to have a lot of fun in the process."

For Schnell, assisting the MS Society in achieving its awareness-raising mission on a budget of less than \$1,000 was a personal success too, for he has MS. "I've worked with them on so many different projects over the last six or seven years," Schnell says. "We've done everything from snuggies to golf shirts to jackets and awards. The whole gamut." — *Christopher Ruvo*

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