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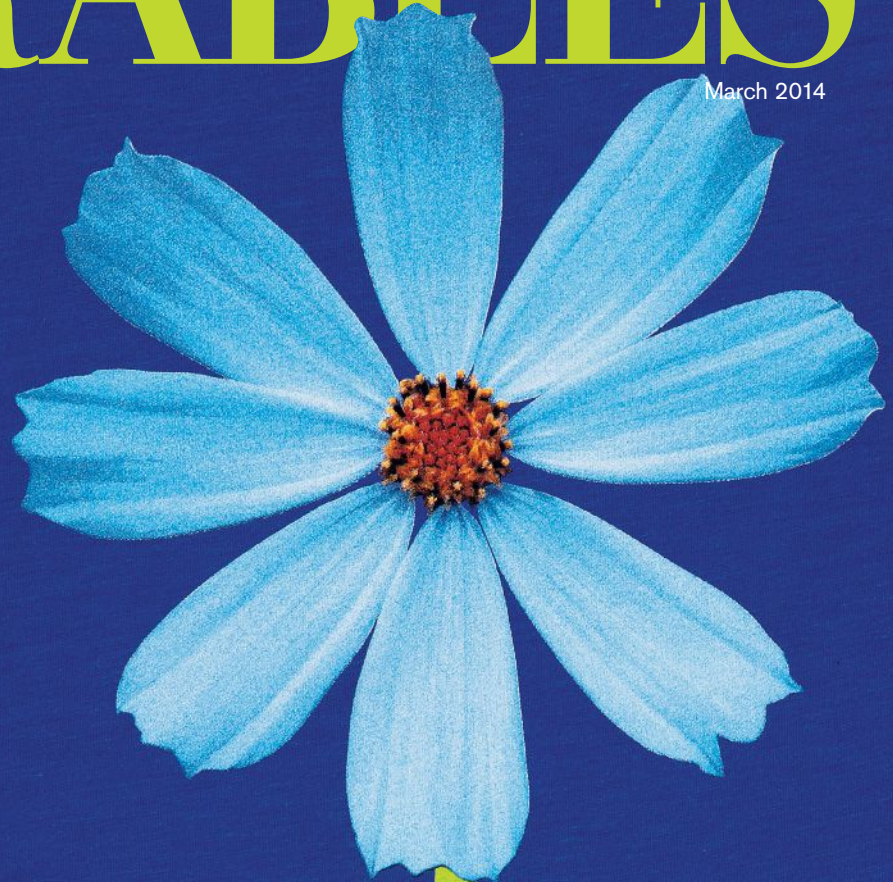
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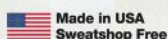
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MARCH 2013 VOLUME 18, Number 3 www.wearablesmag.com

COVER STORY

38 Spring Fashion Preview

The latest trends in color, accessories and much more are all available right now for you to sell. BY C.J. MITTICA

SCREEN-PRINTING SUCCESS

44 Pricing for Profit

What's the best way to formulate your pricing strategy? Hint: It's not simply undercutting your competition.
BY CHRISTOPHER RUVO

48 Maturing Trends Thrive At ISS Long Beach

Plenty of changes were afoot at the decorated apparel show.
BY C.J. MITTICA

52 Say It Loud

Popular text designs and slogan tees can be jazzed up with the right combination of design and special effects.
BY TONIA KIMBROUGH

54 How To: Print Over the Seams

All-over designs are in demand; learn how to avoid complications and prevent seams from ruining a good print.
BY THOMAS TRIMINGHAM

56 History of screen printing

58 Equipment corner

60 Smoke effects



38 SPRING FASHION PREVIEW



10 new vintage colors » 5 new silhouettes » **nano** collection

Hanes

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asi/59528



20



32



58

- 13** About the Cover
- 14** Masthead
- 16** Wearablesmag.com
- 18** From the Editor's Desk

TRENDS

- 20** Florals
- 23** Orchid
- 24** Wovens
- 26** Fleece hoodie
- 27** Metallics

BUSINESS

- 28** Proper sales training
- 29** Extending hospitality
- 30** Q&A: Sarah Johnston,
PromoSpark

EDUCATION

- 32** Today's tees
- 33** Natural or synthetic?
- 34** Boost sales with belts
- 36** Score with sports teams

- 62** Reader Service Index
- 63** B-to-B/Classifieds
- 64** Apparel In Action

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Come Into Bloom

Spring is in the air at *Wearables*. The fashion industry has unveiled its top looks for the season, and so have we for our Spring Fashion Preview. To celebrate the welcome return of T-shirt weather, we feature a Bella+Canvas tri-blend shirt (3413) carried by Bodek and

Rhodes (asi/40788; circle 81 on Free Info Card). The shirt was decorated by T Productions Inc. (circle 140 on Free Info Card). Our Spring Fashion Preview logo was created by Glen Karpowich, senior designer at ASI.

The Shirt

Tri-blends have been on the leading edge of the fashion T-shirt movement over the past few years thanks to their soft hand, easy fit and unique color patterns. Bodek and Rhodes is carrying several new tri-blend colors from Bella+Canvas this year, including emerald, berry, aqua and more. The navy shirt used on the cover is not your traditional navy, featuring a deep-but-vibrant blue that made it the perfect canvas for the light blue flower.

The Design

Karpowich's thoughts instantly went to flowers and springtime when tasked with creating a graphic for our Spring Fashion Preview. "Initially I played with the typography and wasn't getting the result I wanted," he says, "so I looked into incorporating imagery into my design. I searched for images of flowers and springtime scenes – lilies, daffodils, etc." Karpowich initially put the wording on top of the graphic, but it wasn't as readable as he wanted. "Then it occurred to me that within the headline itself, we had three letter I's, which lent itself to making them look like the stem of a flower. I developed that concept using different flowers and placing it on different colored T-shirts."

The Decoration

T Productions produced two possible cover decoration options. A yellow flower was decorated with index printing, which utilizes interlocking stochastic square dots to make up the image. The blue flower that was tabbed for the cover was created with eight-color simulated process, which utilizes halftones of opaque spot colors to produce a wide array of colors. "We chose this method based on the smoothness and wide range of coloration in the image," says Owner Tony Kozlowski. "This technique is more predictable, and more widely used than index, but in my opinion is more sensitive to issues like moiré between halftones, screen mesh and fabric. Simulated process requires tight tolerances and near flawless fundamentals."

Decoration Tips

Kozlowski lists several keys for producing simulated process prints:

- **Be prepared** to experiment and problem solve on press. Not all images are created equally, and even the best prepress still leaves room for experimentation.
- **Document how the job prints**, and any changes that were made on press to use on repeats and future prints.
- **Have the printed image proofed** by a fresh set of eyes (someone who has not been directly involved with the project) and gauge their initial reaction. Sometimes issues are obvious, but those who have been looking at the image for a while may overlook them.
- **Use the force!** The best printers are those who understand and can control ink deposits. After all, it comes down to transferring shapes of ink on fabric, whether it is a block number or an array of dots.
- **Have the image available** at press for proofing (in our case, iPads at every press).

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WEARABLES

PUBLISHER

Richard Fairfield, MASI, rfairfield@asicentral.com,
@RichFairfield

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Melinda Ligos, MASI, mligos@asicentral.com, @ASI_melinda

EDITOR

C.J. Mittica, BASI, cmittica@asicentral.com, @CJ_Wearables

MANAGING EDITORS

Joe Haley, MASI, jhaley@asicentral.com, @asi_joehaley
Joan Chaykin, BASI, jchaykin@asicentral.com,
@asi_joanchaykin

SENIOR WRITER

Christopher Ruvo, BASI, cruvo@asicentral.com, @ChrisR_ASI

STAFF WRITERS

Jennifer Vishnevsky, BASI, jvishnevsky@asicentral.com,
@Jen_Advantages

Chuck Zak, BASI, czak@asicentral.com, @ASI_ChuckZ

INTERN

Sabrina Landry, slandry@asicentral.com

COPY EDITOR

Lindsey Strawser, lstrawser@asicentral.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Tonia Kimbrough, Andy MacDougall, Alissa Tallman
and Tom Trimmingham

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Carole Seymour, BASI, cseymour@asicentral.com

ART DIRECTOR Hillary Haught, BASI, @HaughtArt

SENIOR DESIGNER Glen J. Karpowich, BASI,
@KarpoDesigner

DESIGNER Melissa Lascala, BASI, mlascala@asicentral.com

EDITORIAL PHOTOGRAPHER Mark Pricskett, MASI,
@marcOphotO

ART INTERN Jessica Williams

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PRODUCTION & ADVERTISING OPERATIONS

Haitham Barakat, BASI

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT & ANALYSIS

Debra Brill, BASI

Advertising Specialty Institute

CHAIRMAN

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Ron Ball, MASI

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Ed Koehler, BASI

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

Matthew Canamucio, BASI, Vince Deissroth, BASI, Mary Fox,
Suzanne Izzo, BASI, Jason Krenzle, BASI,
Cindi Mann, BASI, Sean McGuigan, BASI, Barry Melito, Phyllis
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Suzanne Rozick, BASI, Mary Sells, MASI, Krista Taylor, BASI,
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NEWSLETTER

Ends in a Tie

No business uniform is really complete without a tie. The ultimate business accessory is available in slimmer widths and bolder patterns. Our *Wearables* Style e-newsletter looks at the latest trends for this top men's product.



VIDEO

Batter Up

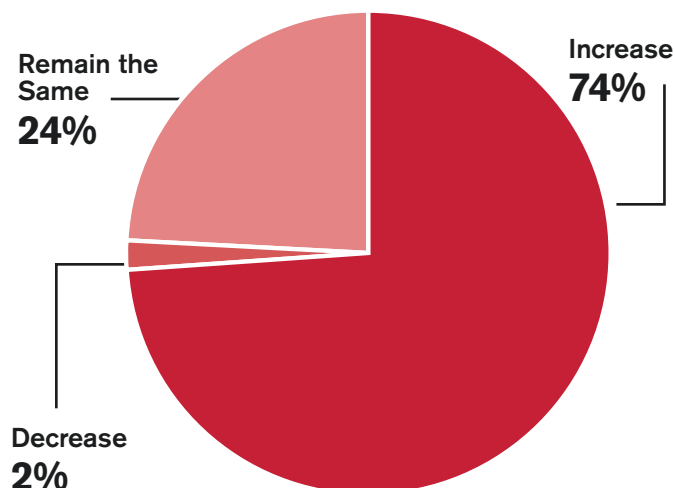
It's Spring Training, and sports fans are not the only ones paying attention. Fashion continues to take its cues from baseball when it comes to the leading casual styles. *Wearables* Editor C.J. Mittica looks at some of the latest baseball-inspired garments in this video.

WEARABLES SALES FORECAST

Sales Advantage

In the *Wearables* Sales Forecast, we asked screen printers, "How do you expect your T-shirt sales to change over the next 12 months?"

This data and much more are available in our *Wearables* Sales Forecast, which can be found at <http://bit.ly/1fjOiYv>.



SHOW COVERAGE

Head to the Beach

Our complete coverage from the ASI Long Beach show features all the latest apparel and product discoveries, as well as recaps of top-level business strategies to make your company better than before. Follow our website, newsletter and ASICentral YouTube channel for all the latest updates from the show.





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MONEY TALKS

We need to talk about money. That get you on your toes? It's a touchy subject. You never make enough of it, obviously, and how you spend or save it is always up for debate.

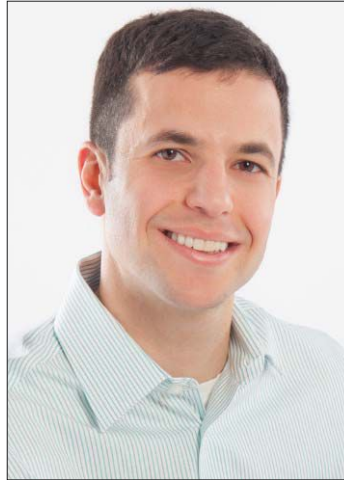
Let's frame it in the context of your business. Are you charging your clients the right amount? Prices too high? Or do you give in too often to win the business? Could you be charging more? Do your clients really care about cost and nothing else?

As you can see, there are hundreds of questions and no easy answers. In fact, there are two sentiments in this issue regarding pricing, and they need to be reconciled.

In our "Pricing for Profit" feature, we examine the methodology you should employ when determining prices for your decoration shop. Costs, overhead, margins and more all need to be taken into consideration. But the article drives home the point that simply undercutting your competition on price and engaging in a price war is a poor way of doing business. "The whole exercise becomes a giant race to the bottom to see who can go out of business first," says Marshall Atkinson, chief operating officer at Visual Impressions.

That idea isn't new. Long-time readers have heard time and again not to sell your services short. Constantly competing on price eats at your margins. You can never really get ahead. Got it.

Yet in our "I Believe" Q&A, Owner Sarah Johnston of PromoSpark (asi/349939) says that 90% of her clients care most about the lowest price. "We've had customers go elsewhere over one or two pennies," she says. "It's primarily the younger generation. They know they can shop 100 other companies just like ours. They expect the great customer service, product quality and on-time delivery for the lowest price. I do believe distributors, to an extent, have to change their 'old school' thinking. There is too much competition



“My belief: consumers don't want the lowest price, but a good price. They want value.”

and if you believe that just your service and quality will sell, think again.”

So low price matters to customers, but don't compete on price. Are both of these things possible?

My belief: consumers don't want the lowest price, but a good price. They want value. I don't want the cheapest item available when I buy things. But once I've verified the quality of a product, I will shop around for a reasonable price, and I will find it. (Which, to be honest, is usually through Amazon.)

Yes, there will be those customers who haggle over that penny. I believe most will do business with the people they like and trust so long as the price is close – especially once a relationship is established. But if your shop is going to specialize in volume with nothing added, by all means go low or go home.

One thing is clear: the debate about pricing and money is never ending. I hope our articles can provide some guidance.

Thanks for reading,

Charles J Mitten

WHAT'S IN MY CLOSET?



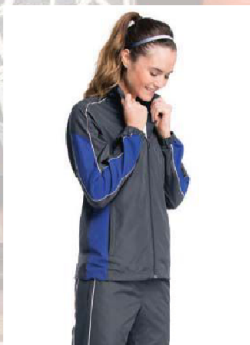
Each issue, we ask our readers a simple question: What is your favorite branded apparel item in your closet? Send in a photo of you and your favorite garment, and tell us in a paragraph why you love it. We run one submission each issue, and that lucky winner receives a \$25 Visa Gift card.

This issue, our submission comes from Andy Vantrease, account manager for Activate! Promotions + Marketing (asi/141964): "Without a doubt, my favorite branded garment is my gray Virginia Tech hoodie. Made by Authentic Apparel, I remember buying it at the campus bookstore during my freshman orientation eight

years ago and realizing that at that moment I was officially a Hokie. Back then, I didn't think twice about the type of decoration, weight of the fabric or cost of construction – I just knew I loved it! Now when I look at it, I see the sheen of the tackle twill appliqué letters and the woven private label on the inside. I feel the 9-ounce poly-cotton blend and how it's gotten softer with every single wash cycle. I think of the market for college apparel and what's selling these days. Despite how popularity has changed from cotton-based products to Nike DriFit and Under Armour, I still can't get enough of my 'vintage' hoodie that fits even better now than the day I bought it. Go Hokies!"



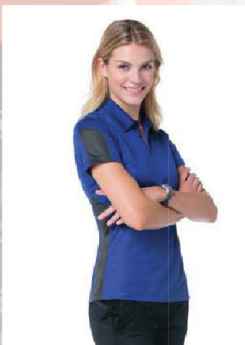
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TRENDS

THE HOTTEST
APPAREL AND
ACCESSORIES

By Alissa Tallman

Petal Pusher

THE NEWEST SPRING fashions are literally blooming with floral décor, thanks to the latest designs from Stella McCartney, Elie Saab and Carven. From tiny, compressed patterning to large-scale prints, this is an outstanding trend to consider for businesses and events of all types. "We'll see traditional floral hues give way to vibrant red, fluorescent pink and metallic-bronze abstracts," predicts Michael O'Leary, account executive for McKlein Co LLC (asi/70053).

Flowers aren't just for women these days, either. Several runway designers incorporated flamboyant florals in their spring 2014 men's collections. Overall, flower designs are especially stunning on logoed handbags and totes as well as men's and women's tops. Floral embroidery and imprints make a unique addition to footwear and headwear items as well.





Floral-print scrub top (C10307-WGN) from Broberry Mfg Inc (asi/42057; circle 89 on Free Info Card).



Premium rhinestone design from Sparkle Plenty Designs (asi/88442; circle 92 on Free Info Card).

DECORATION TIP

Bling is the ultimate attention-getter, and Sparkle Plenty Designs can turn any logo into a brilliant bling design. However, don't always expect a one-to-one copy of a logo. "The only caveat is that we cannot always get the tiny details in stones like you can with ink, since stones take up much more space than ink does," says Co-Owner Lee Sequeira. "But we always suggest the best look and give options to our customers."



Breast cancer support tee (4831) from Rugged Outfitters Inc (asi/84143; circle 88 on Free Info Card).



Foot supportive mules (83516) from Hammacher Schlemmer (asi/59444; circle 87 on Free Info Card).



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Get Creative with Pantone's Color of the Year

IT'S NO SURPRISE that orchid is Pantone's official Color of the Year for 2014. Besides taking the Spring/Summer Fashion Week runways by storm in designs by the likes of Dior, Alexander Wang and Versace, this upbeat hue is also making a major appearance in the latest retail fashions.

Elson Yeung, product line manager and designer for Ash City USA (asi/37127), says that in terms of promotional wear, orchid is an outstanding color for women's blouses and men's shirts. "Orchid is a very professional-looking shade when it comes to woven shirts," he says. "The combination of a nice woven fabric with an orchid shade provides a confident, modern and professional look for a tradeshow, a staff event or any other situation where you want your campaign or company to be represented in a tasteful and refined way."

Yeung states that promotional-apparel companies who offer updated, trendy hues like orchid are doing corporate wear a big favor. "Orchid and similar purple shades are unique color offerings for the industry," he says. As such hues are primarily found in retail apparel, but they're not retail-only shades. And while some people will hesitate with a hue like orchard, Yeung suggests they reconsider. "Many people think they wouldn't look good wearing such a color only to realize how amazing it actually looks once they've tried it," he says.

Be sure to consider carefully and select a hue that is suitable for both men and ladies. Says Yeung, "Unlike the retail industry – where unique, trending colors would appeal to a specific buyer – it's important to put yourself in the customers' shoes because they are often buying for a promotional campaign or a group."



Supple women's cotton blouse (78689) in orchid at **Ash City USA** (asi/37127; circle 93 on Free Info Card).

FASHION TIP
Orchid makes for a snazzy pairing with cobalt blue or denim. An orchid woven shirt would make a standout match with jeans and a bright blue scarf or jacket.



Comfortable women's scrubs (4101P) from **Rugged Outfitters Inc** (asi/84143; circle 88 on Free Info Card).

Orchid by Another Name

While Pantone's "Radiant Orchid" is a purple with elements of pink, many suppliers carry Pink Orchid, which skews more pink than purple. The color is still very radiant, as seen on this ruffled easy-care button-down (L644) from SanMar Canada (asi/84864; circle 94 on Free Info Card). Decoration by A&P Master Images (circle 104 on Free Info Card).



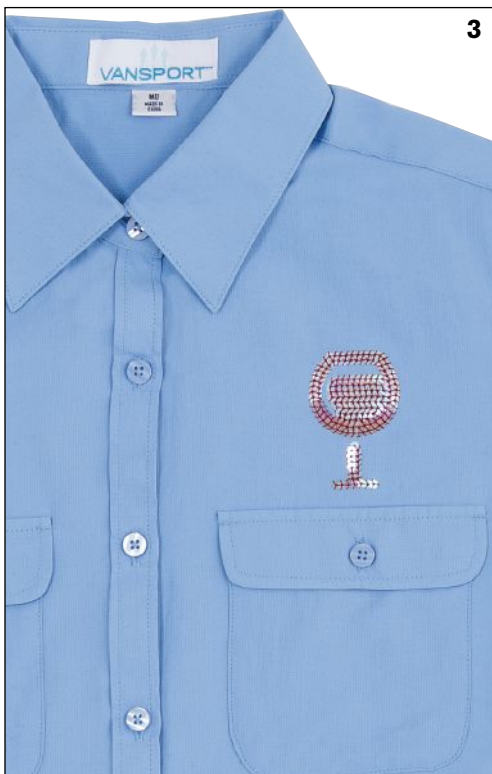
Wovens

BY CHUCK ZAK

WHAT THE RIGHT woven does for the wearer is hard to quantify. A big part of the appeal, however, comes from the satisfaction of looking as polished as you feel, and knowing that the respect earned as a competent professional is reflected in your clothes.

And when a quality shirt carries an equally well-designed logo, it brings the wearer into closer harmony with their organization. The relationship between individual and institution depends on many things, but the branded garment is one important point of convergence. It's a focal point that is not lost on the wearer, and certainly not on the customer he or she interacts with.





3



4



8

1. Men's North End Sport cotton checkered dobby twill shirt (88688) featuring a wrinkle-free finish from **Ash City** (asi/37127; circle 105 on Free Info Card).
2. Cotton/polyester twill shirt (W908LS) with white contrast piping on chest and back side panels from **Tri-Mountain** (asi/92125; circle 107 on Free Info Card).
3. Women's easy-care Vansport Trip shirt (1848) with roll-up sleeves and moisture wicking from **Vantage Apparel** (asi/93390; circle 106 on Free Info Card).
4. Easy-care men's dress shirt (622) made with fade-resistant cotton/poly brushed twill from **Whispering Pines Sportswear** (asi/97027; circle 111 on Free Info Card).
5. Women's long-sleeve cotton/poly shirt (97655) with tapered waist for a flattering fit from **Trimark Sportswear Group** (asi/92122; circle 108 on Free Info Card).
6. No-iron, men's dress shirt (1976) with a traditional fit and button-down collar from **Edwards Garment** (asi/51752; circle 82 on Free Info Card).
7. Textured cotton/poly men's Oxford shirt (MOON) with especially comfortable fit from **Big Bang Corporate Apparel** (asi/43442; circle 110 on Free Info Card).
8. Regular fit men's non-iron dress shirt (W533) made with 100% Supima cotton from **River's End Trading Company** (asi/82588; circle 109 on Free Info Card).

Three Selling Tips

1 Keep both sexes in mind. Making both sexes look their best requires specific features, and satisfying a client requires ample options for each. "Ladies tend to like the 3/4-length sleeves and the tapered waist," says Mike Beckman, president of Proforma BPM (asi/300094), adding that elastic at the seams is a popular option.

2 Offer decoration choice. "Corporate clients are looking for dress shirts that provide a canvas for their logo and reinforces their identity," says Lori Anderson, marketing manager for River's End Trading Company (asi/82588). These shirts will function as a business card, basically, and branding them requires a certain synergy between garment and logo. "If you have a finance company with a one or two-color, horizontal logo," says Anderson, "you may recommend a subtle tone-on-tone on the pocket with monogrammed initials on the cuff." Find the balance between showcasing the brand and maintaining the appropriate professional image. Constant invention in decoration — such as River's End's ability to embroider on the pocket — helps widen the choices. "There are so many options for placement, applications and ways to use thread color," continues Anderson. "You can offer clients very unique and different options."

3 Materials make a difference. "The no-iron easy care shirts are the better sellers right now," says Beckman. "Lighterweight fabric is more popular over the traditional cotton or poplin shirts." For uniform styles, both Beckman and Anderson recommend showing clients samples with soil-resistant material, while easy-care, moisture-wicking options are crucial options as well.



Concert Hoodie

THERE'S NOTHING QUITE like a comfy, cozy hoodie. One that reflects current style trends is key when choosing a quality garment to showcase a company or brand. This fleece hoodie (DT801) from SanMar (asi/84863; circle 95 on Free Info Card) is a superb choice. Its subtle contrast-color detailing is very on-trend, and it's available in several updated colors, including bright neon hues. Hoodie and garments were screen printed by A&P Master Images (circle 104 on Free Info Card).

Decoration Tip

When printing multiple garments for the same client, don't worry about each imprint being an exact match, especially with different materials and fabric constructions. "You do not always have to have the colors match up as long as the design and the color of the apparel go together well," says Howard Potter, CEO of A&P Master Images. "You can get away with doing one location on one piece and multiple on the others."

At Leisure

Playful and fashionable, this outfit is tailor made for attending a weekend sporting event.



Canvas hat (51066) from **Ourray Sport-wear** (asi/75402; circle 96 on Free Info Card)



Raglan camo tee (8036) from **Rothco** (asi/83708; circle 97 on Free Info Card)



Yoga pants (FW1542) from **Fersten World-wide Inc** (asi/53974; circle 98 on Free Info Card)

Relaxed Elegance

This ensemble is casual yet feminine, perfect for Friday at the office or a trade show.



Long-sleeve thermal (04305EU) from **Alternative Apparel** (asi/34850; circle 99 on Free Info Card)



Crossbody purse (712) from **Clava American** (asi/45335; circle 100 on Free Info Card)



Denim skirt (FK201) from **Dickies** (asi/49675; circle 101 on Free Info Card)

Gold Rush

GLITZY, FLAMBOYANT, DAZZLING – metallic gold is forecast to be a spring fashion show-stopper. Haider Ackermann's present collection includes a remarkable gold double-breasted jacket as well as gold dresses, while Dries Van Noten's latest designs feature an abundance of golden ruffles and knee-length skirts.

Heather Biben, senior merchandiser for The Corporate Marketplace Inc (asi/46743), assures that the metallic gold trend has guaranteed staying power. "Gold will always be in style," she says. She points out gold's traditional association with wealth as well as power and confidence. "Think of fairy tales, where gold is the most desired by those in charge," she says.

In terms of gold jewelry, Biben recommends implementing it whenever possible, as it lends the wearer a considerable amount of class and prestige. "Although solid-gold pieces are usually beyond the average consumer's budget," she says, "wearing gold-accented accessories lends an ensemble an updated appearance, plus it comes across as being richer and more sophisticated."



Women's sunglasses (SUN1360) from **The Corporate Marketplace Inc** (asi/46743; circle 102 on Free Info Card)



FASHION TIP
Because gold has wonderful neutral properties, it looks fabulous when paired with darker neutrals or bright vivid hues.

Leather handbag (11T78905-METAL) from **AMC Special Markets** (asi/30198; circle 103 on Free Info Card).



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asi/49675

THE CHALLENGE

‘How Can We Improve the Training For New Sales Reps?’

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Sometimes, sales “training” consists of little more than this terse directive. That’s unfortunate, for such lack of guidance sets reps up for failure, resulting in lost time and money for the company. To prevent this wastefulness, it’s important to provide new hires with proper training and to continue to support them over time. “Taking a systematic approach to training will position the rep to succeed, which makes your company more successful,” says David Blaise, owner of Blaise Drake & Co., an industry consultancy. Here are some training tips to follow.

Offer Industry-Specific Education: Giving reps that are new to the world of imprinted apparel a strong educational foundation in the industry’s workings is essential. For example, in a 10-hour training course Blaise offers called Getting Started, new hires receive instruction about everything from price codes to imprint methods.

Training Quick Tips

Have experienced reps mentor new reps. This gives fresh hires a trusted confidant they can go to for guidance.

Ensure your training is structured. The more defined the training and its objectives are, the better the chances that reps will grasp essentials quickly.

Show you care. If you’re a sales manager, check in regularly with new hires to see if there is anything you can do to help them be more successful. — CR

At the Northbrook, IL-based distributorship Added Incentives, the in-house training focuses on an array of areas, from learning about key suppliers to dealing with e-mail proofs and the process of placing an order. Believing that a broad base of product knowledge proves pivotal in winning sales, Caliendo Savio Enterprises (asi/155807) has representatives from supplier partners meet with new hires to review their offerings and get advice. Recently, CSE hired two young sales associates who benefitted greatly by meeting with apparel suppliers. “They learned about garment fabrics and got great tips on how to sell them,” says Mark Ziskind, chief operating officer for the New Berlin, WI-based supplier.

Provide Sales Process Instruction:

Whether reps are new to the industry or new to sales altogether, many top firms find it important to educate them about the sales processes of the imprinted products business. At Added Incentives, reps receive intensive practical training. “We go over every step of the sales process, from prospecting and pitching to client management,” says Vice President Danny Friedman. Sales situation role-playing helps bring real-world scenarios to life, enabling reps to better learn and think on their feet. “We’ll do situations like being in front of a gatekeeper and finding out who the decision maker is,” says Friedman.

Even if a new associate has industry experience, sales process training can help sharpen skills. While CSE acknowledges that each rep must use a style that suits them, the distributorship wants its associates to operate within the framework of a consultative selling approach that seeks to invigorate clients’ brands while inspiring those customers’ employees and/or customers. Beyond



extensively communicating this philosophy to new hires, CSE provides practical advice on consultative selling and reviews its new business pitches so reps can see how the company positions itself with customers.

Deliver Real-World Mentoring: When it comes time to start pounding the pavement, Friedman doesn’t send new associates onto the streets alone. He’ll often accompany them on in-person presentations, serving as a safety net if they run into trouble and observing their performance so afterward he can provide pointers for improvement. Similarly, Friedman has reps attend his meetings with prospects and clients so they can see how an experienced industry pro handles situations. “You can’t help but learn a few things that will be helpful,” says Friedman.

Keep The Learning Going: Even after reps get on their feet, offering continued professional development will help them grow business. CSE provides continuing education on consultative selling, helping associates hone their skills. Companies also often elect to have reps undergo outside training. Many established pros have benefitted from the instruction Blaise offers on how to maximize business with current clients and layer in lucrative new accounts. This year, some CSE associates will attend outside training at a sales boot camp. “We want to accelerate our people’s proficiencies,” says Ziskind. — Christopher Ruvo

MARKET SPOTLIGHT

Hospitality Hot Spot

Heat up your sales by targeting hotels and resorts.

Resorts and hotels are experiencing renewed revenue growth that makes them increasingly attractive clients.

The American Hotel & Lodging Association reports that the lodging industry generated \$39 billion in pre-tax income in 2012 (the most recent year for which figures were available) – a 14.3% increase over the prior year. Additionally, total industry revenue in 2012 topped \$155.5 billion, an \$8.1 billion rise. Resort revenue and hotel reservations are poised for an uptick over the next few years, too, according to IBISWorld. “I see the potential with hospitality industry customers continuing to grow,” says Nina Shatz, director of sales with Red Ball Promotions (asi/346567).

Shatz is already capitalizing on that potential. She counts among her clients a large hospitality group for which she has provided everything from dip-dyed ties for front desk staff to special T-shirts for hotel openings. She has also come through with higher-end jackets for potential hotel investors and loyal customers while delivering branded scarves for destinations in cold weather areas.

Shatz isn't the only one scoring success with the lodging industry. Based in Las Vegas, Steven Raucher has built a thick book of business with casino resorts. The owner of Proforma GPS Global Promotional Sourcing has delivered decorated polos, T-shirts, jackets and more for resorts that use the apparel for

everything from gifts for employees to incentivizing customers. In a recent sale to a casino resort, Raucher provided 6,000 hooded sweat-shirts that featured a print of the Vegas skyline across the chest. “We had the print run across the zipper,” says Raucher. Intended for resort visitors who played to a certain dollar level on casino machines, the hoodies were a hit. Says Raucher, “There wasn't a single one left.”

If you need a leg-up on connecting with buyers at resorts and hotels, Shatz suggests networking in through your current clients from other industries. “Corporate travel is really opening up,” she says. “Ask your clients where they're going and who they're staying with. Ask if they have a contact there.” – CR

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I Believe...

The who, what and wear of industry experts

BY SARAH JOHNSTON, AS TOLD TO CHRISTOPHER RUVO

... Apparel must perform: Our clients within the racing community definitely want performance apparel, with ladies' cut options and many color choices. They're looking for a piece with anti-microbial performance and, in many cases, ultraviolet protection. You can complement the apparel with Infuser water bottles and Panther Vision (asi/75825) hats.

... Oversized printing is on the way up: When it comes to screen printing, the bigger the design, the better for many customers. Performance inks for polyester printing are trending, too. Other inks that are growing more popular include clear ink for a tone-on-tone look, silicone ink and fluorescents.

... Sometimes, you have to keep your cards close to your chest: I've done my research over the last six months and see one market niche that is expanding rapidly. I can't give away all my trade secrets, though!

... The T-shirt is timeless: The basic T-shirt has not gone out of style. It's still 80% of our business.

... The biggest challenge facing the industry is price: Although some experts

say price doesn't matter, that has not been my experience. Ninety percent of my clients are mainly concerned with the lowest price. We've had customers go elsewhere over one or two pennies. It's primarily the younger generation. They know they can shop 100 other companies just like ours. They expect the great customer service, product quality and on-time delivery for the lowest price. I do believe distributors, to an extent, have to change their "old school" thinking. There is too much competition and if you believe that just your service and quality will sell, think again.

... It's okay to "want it all": Because we are a "younger generation" company and we want it all, we deliver it all. We provide the customer service, quality and low price. We want to make each customer feel special by providing personal attention and a price they are happy with.

... In going the extra mile – literally: We once hand-delivered an order to Utah that was caught in customs. More than 7,000 shirts shipped from China got caught in customs in California three days before a marathon in Utah. My husband Mark (who is my business partner) flew to California, rented a U-Haul, got the shirts out of customs and drove them to Utah with a few hours to spare before thousands of people showed up to pick up their packet and shirt. Together, we both have endless determination and a fear of failing.

... It's important to have fun: When I'm not working, I spend time with my husband and two boys (ages three and six), travel, visit with family/friends and play practical jokes on people. I also enjoy remodeling and home improvement projects, running in 10K and 15K races and volunteering at various events.



Sarah Johnston

- Owner of PromoSpark (asi/349939), a multimillion dollar distributorship in Ohio that has increased sales and profits 10% to 40% annually since inception.
- PromoSpark named to *Counselor* magazine's 2013 "Best Places to Work" list
- Named to *Counselor's* 2011 "Hot List"

... I've been lucky to find the perfect match: My husband gives me the drive and inspiration to continue to improve professionally and personally every day.

... Everyone has favorites: My favorite imprintable apparel brands are OGIO – great quality products for business casual that can transition to dinner-out attire – and Bella (asi/39590), with its soft items and trendy product line that can be paired with jeans or running shorts.

... You can never learn too much: Thirteen years into this industry, I am still learning something new every day. For people just starting out, I'd say network, ask a lot of questions, grow slow and steady and listen to the advice that veteran distributors offer.

“The basic T-shirt has not gone out of style. It's still 80% of our business.”

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BEGINNER – 100

Fresh Take On Tees

The classic T-shirt will always have a place in a wardrobe. This Spring/Summer 2014, get ready for smart, stylish women's tees that take fashion and fit as seriously as function. Here are four fresh options to consider:

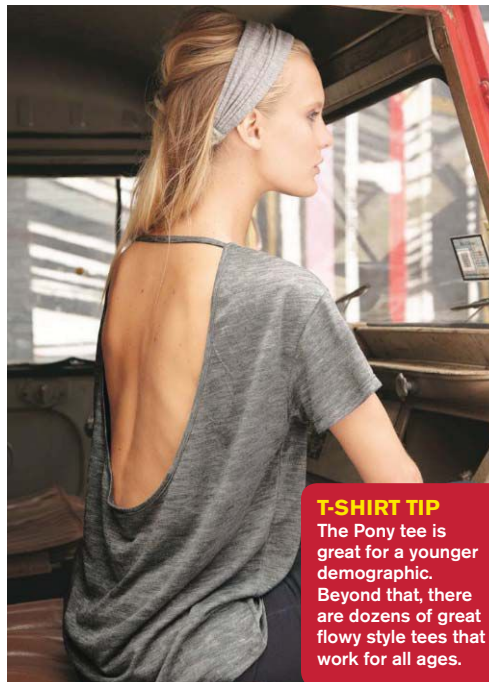
T-SHIRT TIP

"Adding an extra element to a fabric is another strong trend right now," says Marketing Director Margaret Crow of S&S Activewear. "Whether it's adding an overall design in the weaving process, such as with Alternative's edgy prints, or adding glitter as in J. America's new glitter t-shirt... that extra element adds value for the end-user."



J. America's new glitter T-shirt (8138) from **S&S Activewear** (asi/84358; circle 76 on Free Info Card) shines fashionably with its special weave. It's made from a 3.2-ounce fabric comprised of 95% cotton and 5% Lurex. It'll be a hit with any number of youthful female groups.

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



T-SHIRT TIP

The Pony tee is great for a younger demographic. Beyond that, there are dozens of great flowy style tees that work for all ages.

A deep scooped back with flowing fabric folds sets a new trend for tees. This Alternative Ladies' Pony Burnout T-shirt (2623) from **Eva Sportswear** (asi/52834; circle 79 on Free Info Card) is made from a lightweight 3.1-ounce 50/50 polyester/rayon blend that offers superior drapability. The look is sophisticated yet relaxed.

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

Aurum Organic (circle 78 on Free Info Card) introduces a ladies T-shirt (78) made of 100% 30 singles certified organic cotton, ring-spun and combed for a super soft hand. Eleven colors are available as well as a men's version. Aurum also offers custom apparel services, such as custom labeling (including tagless), low minimum orders and custom cutting/sewing services. Photo courtesy of Aurum Organic



American Apparel

(asi/35297; circle 120) is now offering its top-selling fine jersey tee (2001) in tall sizes, with an additional 1 5/8" in added length. The unisex shirts are available in three colors initially: black, white and asphalt. It features a durable rib neckband and a soft and light 4.3 ounce cotton fabric. Photo courtesy of American Apparel (asi/35297)

T-SHIRT TIP

Specialty sizing is a major advantage in serving customers. By offering shirt styles in both regular and tall, distributors can service the entire team and ensures you won't be excluded from a sale. Be sure to scale the decoration to fit the taller size.

"Adding an extra element to a fabric is another strong trend right now."

Margaret Crow, S&S Activewear
(asi/84358)

Make The Imprint As Trendy As The Tee

Stahls' ID Direct (asi/88984; circle 80 on Free Info Card) has launched enhanced Stahls' CAD-CUT Fashion-FILM. This hot-peel heat-transfer material is designed for cutting intricate details and designs. Fashion-FILM features a two-second tack for base layers, making both one- and two-color applications faster than ever. The result is decreased production time and increased profits.

Fashion-FILM is mounted on a carrier and is designed for use with your vinyl cutter and heat press. Once heat-applied, it features a soft hand and matte finish – perfect for personalizing lightweight cotton, polyester and Lycra/spandex apparel.

Photo courtesy of Stahls' ID (asi/88984)



T-SHIRT TIP

If the shirt is organic, make sure the decoration has eco bonafides as well. Screen printers should use phthalate-free inks. Water-based inks have many benefits as well.

Fabric Matchup: Natural vs. Synthetic

Think of the well-known Cotton Incorporated jingle, “The touch, the feel of cotton... the fabric of our lives.” The tagline suggests a lot about the natural fiber: Its softness and durability, and, in particular, that being a plant-based fiber means it’s better for us all. There certainly is a high perceived value of a 100% ring-spun cotton garment.

In truth, there are benefits to synthetic fibers as well. Manmade fibers are typically engineered to serve a specific purpose. They may imitate a natural fiber but be intended as a less expensive alternative. Or they may have properties that provide improved performance over natural fibers.

Today’s synthetic fibers have come a long way from the scratchy, leisure-suit polyester of the 1970s. “Many synthetic fabrics are as smooth and soft as manmade,” says Mary Ellen Nichols, director of marketing at Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788). If your client wants features that a natural fabric

can’t support, she advises that you recommend a synthetic alternative or blend. Spun polyester, for example, has a softer hand than its earlier counterpart. When combined with another fiber, manmade or natural, polyester really shines.

Fabrics engineered with performance technologies inherently change the fiber to enhance how it wears and feels. Microfibers were one of the earliest performance

“Many synthetic fabrics are as smooth and soft as manmade.”

Mary Ellen Nichols, Bodek and Rhodes
(asi/40788)

Fiber Facts

Fibers are an important factor worth assessing when choosing an apparel solution for your client. Here are three facts to consider:

- A fiber is a filament that is twisted into yarns and then used in the production of a textile.
- Fibers come in two varieties – natural or manmade – which can tell you a lot about how the garment will feel, wear and perform.
- Denier measures the weight of a continuous filament. The lower the weight, the finer the fiber is.

fabrications and are typically made of polyester or nylon but sometimes acrylic or rayon. According to www.fabriclink.com, these extra-fine fibers are “two times finer than silk, three times finer than cotton, eight times finer than wool and 100 times finer than a human hair.” In fact, the strands that make the fiber up are so fine they can be referred to as microdeniers, meaning they weigh less than 1.0 denier.

So how do you steer a client in the right fiber direction? Is there a case to be made



Synthetic fibers, such as the 100% micro-polyester used in the UltraClub Men’s (8325) and Women’s Platinum Performance birdseye polos (8325L) with TempControl Technology, bring together benefits that were once reserved for only natural fibers. Available from **Bodek and Rhodes** (asi/40788; circle 81 on Free Info Card).

Photo courtesy of Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788)

for one type of fiber over another? Nichols suggests a few key questions: What sort of conditions must the fabric withstand? How must it perform? Will it be worn as a uniform? What sort of laundry conditions will it be subject to withstanding?

Sometimes the answer just comes down to a personal preference. “It’s whatever the client prefers or whatever the need for the garment dictates,” Nichols says. “If she or he is a cotton or organic diehard... then show cotton or organic pieces. If the prospect wants features that a natural garment can’t support, then move to synthetic. Many synthetic garments are as smooth and soft as natural.”

ADVANCED – 300

Build Better Sales With Belts

Need to hold up your sales? Add a belt to your next promotional apparel program. Belts are both fashionable and functional and have a long history of use. The earliest form of belts were used to hold tools and weapons for foraging and hunting. As they evolved, belts became decorative, while also remaining practical. The belt replaced suspenders as a more comfortable way to hold up men's trousers, for example.

Today, they're an important part of uniform programs. "Really any uniform program should include a belt," says Taraynn Lloyd, marketing director for Edwards Garment Co (asi/51752). "It's an accessory that completes the style. Belts are most often used in programs where the top is required

to be tucked-in. This may include uniform programs for banks, customer service, museums, retail, security, medical offices and hotel properties." When isn't a belt an essential part of a uniform? Lloyd says they aren't necessary when an apron is worn over pants (such as a restaurant server) or when shirts are typically worn untucked (like an amusement ride operator).

To simplify the sales process, Lloyd suggests that distributors look for something basic. "A smooth leather belt with a simple closure is best," she says. Choosing a unisex option further simplifies the ordering process, and a version with alpha sizing (small, medium and large) rather than waist sizing (choosing a 36-inch belt to fit a 34-inch

waist) keeps the program uncomplicated.

Edwards Garment's most popular belt styles are a smooth leather belt with a nickel buckle closure in either brown or black. For 2014, the supplier has introduced three new belt styles. A reversible leather belt for men has brown on one side and black on the other. For ladies, there is a skinny leather dress belt. "The thinner width has a more feminine look," Lloyd says.

A final thought is to keep your mind open as to which garments need a belt. Beyond pants, belts work well for dressier shorts with belt loops and for skirts in women's wear. When you do, you'll find the belt to be a positive force for your sales as well as for fashion.



Two new belts from Edwards Garment Co. (asi/51752; circle 110 on Free Info Card) include (top) a reversible men's black and brown belt (RB00) and a thinner women's leather belt (SB01) for a feminine look.

Add a Buckle with a Bang

Help your clients get more bang for their buckle's buck by choosing a multifunction option. A swivel buckle, for example, can stretch the fashion value of a two-sided belt. With a twist of the swivel buckle, the belt can be worn with the inside facing out. One side of the belt itself can be black leather and the other can be tan.

Some belts add value with an unexpected bonus. For example, Redline

(asi/81133) offers the stainless steel belt buckle flask. The clip-on buckle has a small metal vessel that can hold someone's liquor of choice. Other multifunctional styles available from industry suppliers include an electronic scrolling text belt buckle from AightPromos.com (asi/34194) and a patented smart belt buckle from Storus Corporation (asi/89862) that holds credit cards and ID cards safely and securely inside the buckle's chamber.



The scrolling text belt buckle (11202) from AightPromos.com (asi/34194; circle 114 on Free Info Card) can store six messages up to 255 characters each. The programmable buckle allows you to choose the phrase, luminosity and speed of the message.



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What Teams Need, You Can Deliver

As a preferred uniform provider to leading collegiate and professional teams, OT Sports (asi/75265) knows what garments and accessories are required to score a deal. They have outfitted teams on every level for the last 15 years.

“Uniform requirements vary dramatically from sport to sport,” says Scott Gollnick, vice president of sales and marketing at OT Sports. “For example, most hockey jersey orders do not involve the pants, which are more of a specialty item. Yet hockey socks are typically ordered with the jerseys. This is also the case many times for baseball or football uniforms.

“In contrast, uniforms for sports such as basketball, lacrosse or soccer (at least at competitive levels) usually involve a full

head-to-toe uniform order, involving jerseys, shorts and, in some cases, socks, from one supplier.”

When sourcing team uniforms, performance fabrications matter. Can the fabric breathe? Will the material hold up to the wear and tear of the game? “Fabric quality is a major ingredient in the quality of a

“Fabric quality is a major ingredient in the quality of a uniform.”

Scott Gollnick, OT Sports (asi/75265)

uniform,” Gollnick says. “Many companies try to cut corners to help hit price points, and in the end a team will go through more uniforms in a three-year period than if they paid a few dollars more and are able to use them for a longer period.” You’ll also need to consider special issues that each sport presents. Gollnick explains: “In lacrosse, for example, jerseys must endure constant contact with Velcro on the pads, so some materials work better than others.” OT Sports uses a pro-aero polyester circular-knit mesh material for its lacrosse uniforms to resist snagging and abrasions.

Gollnick believes the main attribute of a good uniform partner is experience. He also notes the importance of choosing a domestic manufacturer. “The uniform industry is

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very different from the T-shirt or traditional apparel market," he says. "A company that understands the needs and maintenance of a team is important in providing the right product for each order. Other important attributes are creative designs, superior quality for multi-year use, good turn times, competitive pricing and the ability to fill orders from year to year or to correct errors in a quick and timely fashion."



OT Sports (asi/75265; circle 115 on Free Info Card) offers completely custom uniform options in a number of sports, including lacrosse, baseball and hockey.

A Final Touch

Kickstart your sales with custom-sublimated athletic crew (SOCK-CREW) and knee-high socks from OT Sports (asi/75265; circle 115 on Free Info Card). The team apparel supplier has a patent-pending technology that provides a completely custom sock design with unlimited graphics and no color limitations. "Our ability incorporates logos and images into the socks," says Scott Gollnick, vice president of sales and marketing at OT Sports, "making this product a perfect fit for team uniform socks, corporate promotions and even school and organization fundraisers."



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SPRING FEAST PREVIEW



Kick off the season with the best trends – straight from the runway and retail. By C.J. Mittica

Spring brings hope eternal – certainly for the weather-weary, but also for the sales-savvy. New trends find a home as both winter freeze and client budgets thaw out. Now's the time to tap into the latest trends for the spring/summer fashion shows and pitch something fresh and unique. Because this time of year, the grass really is greener.

– C.J. Mittica is the editor of Wearables.

FASHION VIEW



Decoration Tip

A dark-colored design on any pastel (especially a darker version of the same color) will make it really stand out.

SPRING COLORS

Metallics are a runway trend that is in no danger of losing steam. **Foil decorations** are the easiest and best way to make the trend shine.

Yellow accents – belts, shoes, hats and more – are becoming men's staples with the proliferation of brights.

This isn't the '50s; **pink** is an inspired choice for men, in everything from corporate office attire to more casual fare.

Pastels are having a moment with top designers. Mint, lilac, baby blue (and any other Easter Egg color you can think of) are available in a variety of styles.

Yellow canvas web belt (BB-6027-YLW) from Assertive Creativity (asi/37166; circle 118 on Free Info Card)

Pink 80-doubles men's button-down shirt (RH60) from SanMar (asi/84863; circle 95 on Free Info Card)

Custom screen printed shirt with foil from Golden Goods (asi/57695; circle 119 on Free Info Card)

Unisex cotton piqué tennis shirt in pistachio (PQ412) from American Apparel (asi/35297; circle 120 on Free Info Card)

SPRING MEN'S ITEMS

Florals for men? It's a certifiable trend. Until more industry suppliers plant seeds, Hawaiian shirts are the best way to stop and smell the flowers.

The bold stripe is Pattern 101: Vivid, attention-getting and easy to decorate around. Plus, it makes any wearer look like he just knocked out three sets on the bench press.

Jackets are not just a winter thing. Plenty of climes feature windy days and cool nights, which is where these colorful outerwear choices come out to play.

Two trends for the price of one: The continued proliferation of **camo** and the rise of **patterned shorts**.

Cotton poplin Hawaiian border print shirt (477-BLACK) from Apparelstar (asi/36539; circle 126 on Free Info Card)

Moisture-wicking polo with double chest stripe (3131) from Bishop the Garment Co. (asi/40585; circle 125 on Free Info Card)

Lightweight water-resistant windbreaker (7580 Cruiser) from Landway (asi/66238; circle 127 on Free Info Card)

Urban digital camo shorts (65320) from Rothco (asi/83708; circle 97 on Free Info Card)



Decoration Tip
A giant logo on a striped polo would be overkill. Go subtle and let the bold stripe do the talking.





Decoration Tip

Get creative with headwear branding. Straw hats aren't ideal for direct application, so use a jacquard ribbon to get the message across.

SPRING ACCESSORIES

Top designers tabbed **visors** as a fashion accent, but distributors know they're insanely functional and seriously breathable.

And speaking of breathable, the **straw hat** is the epitome of warm-weather cool. Look for them in wide-brimmed sun hats as well as fashion choices like fedoras.

Michael Bastian and others outfitted their male models in **bandannas** worn around the neck. Branded boldly and worn atop the head is certainly valid for all sorts of markets.

Whether it's called western or boho, **fringe** makes a continual fashion statement in everything from tops to bags.

Tie-dye cotton twill visor (TIEV-100) from Outdoor Cap Co. (asi/75420; circle 121 on Free Info Card)

Straw fedora hat (W170) with decorated woven strap from Footprints USA (asi/55030; circle 122 on Free Info Card)

Cotton imprinted bandanna (4200B22SOL) from Bandanna Promotions (asi/44020; circle 123 on Free Info Card)

Leather fringe bag (ILBS-5151) from Mak Group of Companies/Tomahawk Brand (asi/68595; circle 124 on Free Info Card)

SPRING WOMEN'S ITEMS

Geometric patterns are a couture staple. They carve out space in the promotional sphere with advances like patterned burnout garments.

A trend that's on the button: **Poplin shirts** for women. Custom contrast collars are a standout choice; otherwise, look for creative expressions of color and pattern.

Tuxedo pant striping is mingling with athleticwear constructions. Translation: Look for pant striping in all forms, from formal to casual.

No need to take a vacation: **Bermuda shorts** are back on trend. Vivid colors and performance attributes add a modern touch.



Decoration Tip

Get away from the left chest with wovens. Right chest, sleeve, back yoke and more add an unconventional but welcome touch.



Patterned poplin (10) in cotton/poly fabric from Big Bang Corporate Apparel (asi/92883; circle 110 on Free Info Card)
Striped warm-up pants (Medalist) from Hind Team Sports (asi/60962; circle 128 on Free Info Card)
Performance Bermuda shorts (567052 03) from Driving Impressions (asi/50864; circle 129 on Free Info Card)
Ladies jersey burnout hood (8254) from J. America (asi/62977; circle 130 on Free Info Card)

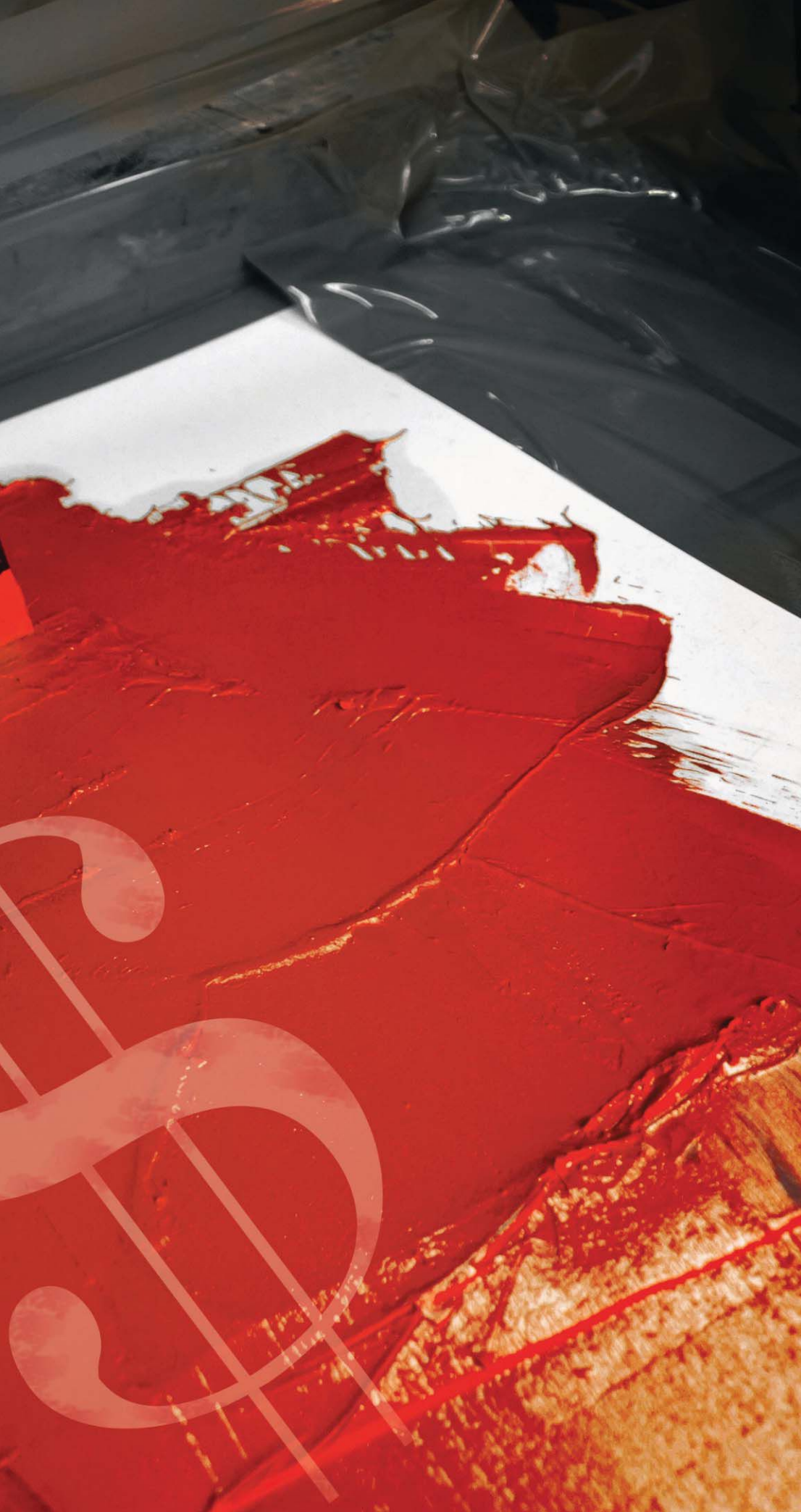


SCREEN-PRINTING SUCCESS

PRICING FOR PROFIT

Use these practical strategies to find your screen printing shop's pricing sweet-spot.

BY CHRISTOPHER RUVO



Your print crew's skills can be second to none. Your customer service can be outstanding. And yet, by failing to price your screen printing correctly, you can soon end up out of business. This is the scary reality of the printing world.

Pricing properly is, indeed, one of the most pressing challenges screen printers face. Part of the reason for that is no single pricing structure works best for every shop. Apparel prices, labor costs, material expenses, additional overhead, the relative economic strength of the market you serve – such things directly impact how you should price and they can differ dramatically from shop to shop. “If you just throw some numbers out there, then you’re not going to be around long,” says Howard Potter, co-owner of A&P Master Images (asi/702505), a Utica, NY-based screen printer.

While no one-shot solution exists, shops can determine pricing that works by methodically analyzing their specific situation and steering clear of common pitfalls. The right pricing structure sets the stage for profitable long-term viability.

Avoid Pricing Pitfalls

It's probably not news that charging exorbitant prices is a fast way to find yourself on the unemployment line. Still, over-charging isn't usually what sinks a shop – undercharging is.

Knowing that competition is intense and that consumers are cost-conscious, some printers' pricing strategy consists of little more than finding out what other nearby shops charge – and then undercutting them. It's not uncommon for these low-balling shops to set their prices without regard for their own cost of doing business. While the tactic may get customers in the door, many who undercut without accounting for the reality of their expenses discover that, while their presses are running, they're working wildly to make little to no profit. Worse, some soon learn that they're operating at a loss. Now they're really in a bind: The only way to get in the black is to find ways to cut expenses – which can lead to drop-offs in quality and service – or to significantly raise prices.

Either way, such moves may result in an exodus of clients. “The whole exercise becomes a giant race to the bottom to see

More Than Pricing

Fair pricing is only one contributing factor to a shop's success. Screen printers must deliver equally well on decoration quality and service. Here are a few tips for doing that.

Optimize Workflow: Ensure your shop is laid out so orders can move from receiving to shipping with minimal steps and inconveniences. Have appropriate tools and materials within easy reach of related work stations. Organize inks and blank inventory so needed supplies can be found with ease. Consider using an industry-specific business management system to standardize order input, enhance job-tracking and facilitate employees' understanding of order requirements.

Be Responsive and Consultative: When a client or prospect has a question, respond as quickly as possible. Once you're in contact, take the extra minutes to leverage your design expertise to consult clients about what print design will work best for them. Not all customers need or desire such attention, but the ones who do will be more apt to work with you again.

Expand Your Capabilities and Services: Become a one-stop resource for customers' screen printing needs by expanding your expertise to include the ability to print on difficult materials like polyester performance wear, polypropylene bags and blended fashion tees. Additionally, consider offering complementary decorating mediums – think heat-printing and direct-to-garment digital printing.

who can go out of business first," says Marshall Atkinson, chief operating officer at Visual Impressions, a Milwaukee-based contract screen printer.

Analyze Apparel Costs

The trick to successful pricing is charging customers rates they're comfortable paying, while at the same time making a decent profit. To do this, smart shops tally up their actual costs for things like apparel, printing supplies, employees, production time and other overhead. They analyze this against what the market they serve can support, and then they develop price lists that balance cost-competitiveness and profitability.

If you're a shop that sells directly to end-users, take your first steps toward a winning price list by understanding to the penny what you pay per-unit for apparel and other items you may print on. This becomes the first factor in determining what you must bill customers. Keep in mind, though, that there's more to your apparel costs than just the wholesale price of the hoodie or tee. You should account for potential misprints and the cost of shipping to receive the apparel, notes the Pennsylvania-based American Screen Printing Association (www.screenprinting-aspa.com) in its e-booklet *How to Set Prices for Custom T-Shirts*.

In a hypothetical scenario envisioned by ASPA, imagine you've been called on to perform a one-color, one-location print on 50 blank shirts costing \$2.50 each. Then say you'll pay .40 cents per shirt for shipping, and assume your shop's misprint average is one out of every 100 shirts for a rounded-up cost of .3 cents. In that case, your real per-unit shirt price is \$2.93.

Since market conditions and other variables can affect shirt prices, it's important to stay on top of potential fluctuations. Tim Guza, owner of Sunday Print Co., routinely monitors the prices of the 10 to 15 core apparel items his Los Angeles-based shop prints. Such attention has led Guza to change rates to stay competitive and profitable. "When the price of cotton went crazy a few years ago, our costs for shirts skyrocketed," says Guza. "We had to increase what we charged based on that. Once shirt prices

came back down, we lowered our prices."

Know Your Labor Costs

Other essential factors to consider in establishing prices are your costs for employees and average production times. Knowing these numbers allows you to fit the next piece into the puzzle of what you should charge per decorated shirt. The key to this essential exercise is determining how long it will likely take you and/or your employees to complete jobs of differing quantity sizes, colors and print locations, and how much you and those employees will be paid during that time.

For elucidative purposes, apply this thinking to the 50-shirt scenario from the American Screen Printing Association. Let's say you're a one-man show, can complete the order in an hour and that you aim to be paid \$50/hour. In that case, you've just added another dollar to the per-unit price of the shirt, making it \$3.93.

At A&P Master Images, Co-Owner Amanda Potter has developed an in-house formula that can be entered into an Excel spreadsheet to break down the costs of labor and other expenses tied to producing each shirt. Essentially, the formula is based on the minimum number of shirts that can be screen-printed in an hour and the average hourly pay rate of the employees who have a hand in producing the job. If a job will take four hours, the average hourly pay rate is multiplied by four and the total cost is spread out into the price of each shirt. Having this formula in place helps A&P produce quick quotes in target margin ranges. "It's financially safe," says Howard Potter.

Examine Overhead

Next up, you need to know what your total monthly costs are for overhead, an umbrella term that can encompass a whole host of things. Examples include rent, utility bills, equipment payments, insurance, taxes, supplies like ink and emulsion, accounting fees, advertising and more. Some shops pay for all these things; others, just a few. Depending on your size and geographic location, overhead costs can vary enormously. "Your overhead," says Greg Kitson, president of Decatur, IN-based screen printer Mind's Eye Graphics, "could be a lot different in Man-

hattan, NY than Manhattan, KS.” As such, it’s important to break out the calculator and crunch your shop’s specific numbers. “We know exactly how much overhead costs us each month,” says Potter. “We know we have to hit that number.”

Once you understand your total monthly costs, the American Screen Printing Association says it may be helpful to think of this overhead as an “expensive employee” and to then do the math to determine what this employee costs you per hour over the course of a month. With that figure handy, you can work the cost into your per-unit shirt price. Let’s say your overhead breaks down to \$50 an hour. Then on that 50-shirt job in the ASPA scenario that takes an hour to produce, you would add \$1 to the individual price of each shirt, taking the total from \$3.93 to \$4.93 per shirt.

Set Margins Strategically

Ascertaining your total expenses to produce particular jobs gives you a baseline of what you need to charge to break even. But of course, you’re not in business to break even; you’re in business to make money. Sure, a 700% mark-up would be great, but that’s probably not practical. Rather than plucking profit margins out of the air, you have to compare your costs with what the market you serve is generally willing to pay and then arrive at a price that makes money without being too expensive.

To determine what the market will bear, try surveying your competitors. (While you don’t want to copy your competitors’ price list in setting your own, you do want to be aware of what they charge.) Some may have pricing available on their websites. With others, you may have to do some digging. If you find you need to levy more than what your market can handle to print profitably, then you may have to tweak your operation to be more competitive. “If you have to sell something for \$14 and the perceived value of it in the marketplace is \$10, that’s not going to work,” says Kitson, who has lectured on pricing at ISS trade shows. “Also, if you determine you can deliver an item with a perceived value of \$10 for \$7 or \$8, you want to charge more like \$9.50. You make a better margin, and you prevent establishing a new bottom for the

market, which can hurt everyone.”

While establishing a standard price list is important, you can deviate from it to charge more for jobs that feature trendy and unique prints done with things like specialty inks. At LA’s Sunday Print Co., the team upcharges when working with, for example, water-based discharge inks and metallic inks, in part because of the high-perceived value of the prints the inks can produce. “A lot of people,” says Guza, “are willing to pay extra for the look and feel.”

So coming back to the ASPA example, say you’ve determined a 30% profit is a reasonable amount to make, given market conditions, on orders like the 50-shirt job that costs you \$4.93 per shirt. Your charge to the customer would then be \$6.41 per shirt, for a tallied price tag of \$320.50, of which \$74 is profit.

Pricing Success

While pricing screen printing correctly is tough, many shops are getting it right. Hemlock Ink is one of them. The Somerville, MA-based shop created a price structure that’s easy for customers to understand because it clearly breaks down printing costs based on things like the quantity of apparel items ordered, the number of colors and print locations, screen setup fees and the type and cost of the garment being decorated.

So formulized is the system that potential buyers can review in-depth pricing on Hemlock’s website and plug order info into an online quote calculator to get instantaneous estimates. “We’re in the middle of the market with our pricing,” says Co-Owner Neal Cado-gan. “We’re not the cheapest, but we offer a very competitive price and strive to be the best in quality and service.”

By combining fair pricing, stellar screen printing and devotion to clients, Hemlock has satisfied a diverse portfolio of buyers, earning the company a five-star rating on Yelp, an online business review site. “These guys are great!” writes a Yelp reviewer. “They’re super friendly and professional and the pricing is extremely fair for the quality they produce.” You can’t ask for better praise than that. *Christopher Ruvo is a senior writer for Wearables. Follow him @ChrisR_ASI and contact him at cruvo@asicentral.com*

Add It Up

How much should you charge to print to perform a one-color, one-location print on 50 blank shirts? Here, we break down the math.

Step 1: Materials Costs

T-Shirt Costs + Shipping + Misprint Costs

$[\$2.50/\text{shirt}] + [\$0.40/\text{shirt}] + [0.03 \text{ cents}] =$

\$2.93/shirt

Step 2: Labor Costs and Production Times

Time in hours x [Staff Rate/hour] / # of shirts

$1 \text{ hr} \times [\$50/\text{hr}] / 50 \text{ shirts} =$

\$1/shirt

Step 3: Overhead

Time in hours x [Overhead/hour] / # of shirts

$1 \text{ hr} \times [\$50/\text{hr}] / 50 \text{ shirts} =$

\$1/shirt

Step 4: Profit

Markup Percentage x Costs

$30\% \times \$4.93 =$

\$1.479

Step 5: Add up the Totals

Material Costs + Labor Costs + Overhead + Profit = Price to Charge Customer

$\$2.93 + \$1 + \$1 + \$1.479 =$

\$6.41/shirt

SHOW REPORT

Maturing Trends Thrive at ISS Long Beach

BY C.J. MITTICA

ISS Long Beach (which took place January 17-19) was host to the maturation of several key apparel trends that have grown in the industry over the past few years. Here is what suppliers and decoration equipment companies have in store for 2014.

Direct-to-Garment Printing: The wide variety of direct-to-garment printers now available means decorators have more choice than ever before with this burgeoning technology. But a sea change is forming, particularly with the arrival of the Epson SureColor series of printers. Stahls' ID Direct (asi/88984) has thrown its considerable weight behind the printer as a distributor, after revealing an aborted attempt a few years ago to develop its own machine. Marketing Director Joe Longtin of AnaJet (asi/16000), which owns the largest market share of DTG revenue and sells its own printers, believes that many manufacturers who outfitted their printers with Epson print heads will now be confronted with a choice. "It's either become an Epson distributor or close your doors," he says.

Pattern: The creeping influence of patterned garments is beginning to be felt. Alternative Apparel (asi/34850) has seen a tremendous response to its printed hoodies, available in patterns like stars and stripes and florals. Camo, too, continues to appear in a number of items. Sweatshirt expert Independent Trading Company has brought camo patterns to two of its top-selling hoodie styles. Tri-Mountain (asi/92125) is the only company doing oilfield camo hood-



Hanes Branded Printwear (asi/59528; circle 138 on Free Info Card) has released new styles in its nano line in a garment-dyed vintage color palette.

ies and sweatshirts. "Oilfield camo is here," says Danny Tsai, VP of merchandising for Tri-Mountain. "This camo is becoming a big seller to the U.S. oil industry."

Transitional Performance Pieces:

The demand for performance pieces that can be worn in everyday settings continues to increase. Hanes Branded Printwear

(asi/59528) has launched its new X-Temp series of garments. The unisex T-shirt is made from a 60/40 ring-spun cotton/poly blend, so the garment wicks but still has a similar hand feel to cotton. It's available in 10 colors, including five neon heather hues. Expert Performance Tee (asi/53404) has launched a number of new items this year, including yoga pants, color-block shirts and a spaghetti



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strap tank with built-in bra. All can be used as activewear or everyday items. “We don’t look at ourselves as just a performance brand anymore,” says Merchandising Developer Nino Phimpachanh “We see ourselves as a lifestyle brand.”

Garment-Dyed Colors: Neon Tees (asi/73583) leads with its neon colors (obviously), but this year it launched its Zero Gravity line featuring garment-dyed earth tones designed for the resort market. Hanes has come out with a new vintage color palette for its youth-facing Nano tees. “Garment dyeing is a huge trend right now,” says Andrew Verga, marketing manager for Hanes Branded Printwear. “People love the washed look. But consistency in color has been the problem in the past. Our team has developed a proprietary process that allows us to achieve the garment-dyed look and feel while maintaining color consistency and color-fastness.” Hanes is offering its Nano styles in 10 vintage shades.

Q&A: Mike Hoffman, Gildan

When Gildan (asi/56842) purchased Anvil Knitwear (asi/36350) in May 2012, the marriage of the two companies seemed promising but needed an answer for its many areas of product overlap. In Long Beach for the ISS Show, the answer to that dilemma was finally revealed with Anvil’s new direction as a fashion basics company. Besides its booth at the Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center during the show, Anvil hosted a fashion show and party on Friday, January 17 in Long Beach’s East Village Arts District. “The excitement and buzz about the Anvil brand has made us excited about what we’ve done,” said Gildan Activewear SRL President Mike Hoffman at the start of the event.

The company revealed 15 new fashionable styles for 2014 that is redefining Anvil’s brand positioning as a fashion basics company. After the fashion show, Hoffman joined Wearables for a one-on-one conversation.

Q Going back two years ago to when Gildan purchased Anvil, what were the benefits of that acquisition?

Mike Hoffman: Anvil was a company we had a lot of respect for as competitors. And



Anvil (asi/36350; circle 139 on Free Info Card) debuted 15 new styles at the ISS Long Beach Show, including a women’s mid-scoop tee (780L) in a new midweight category

we surveyed the business and markets they were selling to, it just seemed like a very good opportunity to us. To take and complement and build upon what we already do, to take the strengths of their company, it’s been a great acquisition. Forget about the financial performance and metrics. Operationally and from a merchandising standpoint, the cultures of the two companies were the same, and it’s created new opportunities for us, not only within the printwear channel, but into the retail sector, leveraging a lot of the resources and businesses they were in.

Q When you purchased Anvil, what were your thoughts with integration with Gildan and what you wanted to do with the Anvil brand?

MH: It was a mid-year acquisition, so there line was set. So we had to go slow. We didn’t want to go in and break the business. We didn’t pretend like we knew Anvil better than Anvil did. So we went around and talked to the customers. We started laying their line out and our line out, and seeing where there was absolute complete duplication, and where there was an opportunity to complement the two lines. These are all new styles that Anvil wasn’t competing in. These are



Mike Hoffman, Gildan Activewear SRL

new to Gildan and new to Anvil. Meanwhile, they still have some of their core styles still in their line that we took. We still offer a Made in USA T-shirt. We still offer a few organic styles. So we didn’t totally cancel everything Anvil did. This is an area of the market that is experiencing a lot of growth, and we need to capitalize on that.

Q During that transition year, what were the feelings like in terms of taking it slow and building up to this moment? Was that an easy thing to do, or were there some difficulties emotionally trying to wait out that year?

MH: You always can’t wait to get to market with new product, and the excitement that we had. In our company, we only have one speed, and that’s high speed. We did a lot in a year and a half, I have to say. I think a lot of people, this really would have taken longer. A lot of resources were put behind this. A lot of research was done. A lot of consulting was done with our distributors about the way forward, and I think we did a good job.

Q Recasting Anvil as this fashion brand, you talked about seeing an area of the market that could be



GroupeSTAHL founder Ted Stahl (left) and CEO Brian Sukarukoff outlined many of the new announcements and product technologies that Stahls' ID Direct (asi/88984) is bringing to market.



Custom Kiss Cut logos from Stahls' ID Direct (asi/88984), which allows for logos with multiple layers to be applied all at once, were one of many newer innovations on display at the company's launch event.

exploited. Why is that the case and why did you see that opportunity?

MH: All you have to do is look around the Imprinted Sportswear show. The basics business is very large, very steady, very consistent, very stable – and we own it. We look around at other areas that are growing and we want to participate in. The younger look. There's more interest in women wanting to dress their way. Younger folks, they want to have a certain look and feel than just a basic, boxy T-shirt. This just allows us to reach into other categories. We could have done it with Gildan, but we just believe we will be more successful much faster using a name and reputation like Anvil's.

Stahls' Goes 'Wild' With Announcements

The early Friday morning event that Stahls' ID Direct hosted was labeled "Stahls' Gone Wild" – a nod to the name of its latest brand partner, but also highlighting the enthusiasm with which the decoration company approached its slate of innovations for 2014. "We've been busy for several years," said Ted Stahl, executive chairman of the board and founder of Groupe STAHL. "This

is just the tip of the iceberg for what we've been working on." Here's a look at what Stahls' has on tap for 2014:

- Flexibility in fabric decoration is at a premium with the need to decorate garments beyond the simple 100% cotton tee. At the show, Stahls' announced advancements on several fronts, most importantly the launch of its TEK line of advanced heat transfer materials. It features an innovative new adhesive called STiX2 that (like the name suggests) stretches and stays to any fabric or material and eliminates dye migration and garment marking. "With this product," said Brian Baker, product development for Groupe STAHL, "you can decorate polyester with confidence." Four different TEK products are currently available, and more (like a glitter version) will be launched early this year.
- The "wild" comes from Stahls' partnership with the Wild Side, a manufacturer of heat transfers and apparel art based out of Los Angeles. "My biggest reward is to be associated with Stahls', a company that helps garment decorators of all sizes become successful," said Frank Gizatullin, president

and CEO of Wild Side. "I've always admired the way the Stahls' team works hard to bring products to the industry to help people profit with personalization."

- Stahls' has launched CadworxLIVE, a free cloud-based design program to create graphics for vinyl cutters, screen-printing equipment and more. For businesses that don't have a graphic designer or extensive experience with leading computer art programs, Cadworx is designed to be user-friendly with a short learning curve. An extensive library of design templates and clipart are already available. Visit www.cadworklive.com to see the program.
- The company also demonstrated the latest advancements with its Hotronix line of heat presses. The addition of a platen that acts as a separator for the top and bottom of a garment (to eliminate marking) can save up to 42% to 48% production time. Quick-change interchangeable platens can save even more time. In addition, Hotronix is launching a full sleeve and leg platen to decorate just the extremities of a garment.

DECORATION TREND

Say It Loud

Popular slogan T-shirt designs don't have to be boring or simple.

BY TONIA KIMBROUGH

Look around malls and schools and you'll see plenty of T-shirts that read "Say It Like You Mean It." Big, bold letters and cheeky sayings are ubiquitous these days. The question, however, is can decorators make the most of the Slogan T-shirt crossover.

"We do lots of slogans," says Gina Barreca, director of marketing for Vantage Apparel (asi/93390), which offers in-house decoration. A few examples of the typical basic text order include promotions for bars, colleges and universities (along with social/academic clubs) as well as destination and travel-related organizations. "Companies often take advantage of printing on the front and back of the T-shirt," she continues, "and many times will combine social media efforts or campaigns such as a Twitter hashtag."

Megan Haines co-owner of MiddletownInk (asi/531055) has experienced a boost in demand for the simple text tee. "Honestly the 'Slogan T' is a cyclical trend that has just come back around," she says. "I think it's attractive to the 15-25 ages because it allows them to speak their mind without getting 'hushed' by anyone who doesn't agree with their viewpoint."

While it is normally a single-color job, "the type of inks and mesh can vary widely with what type of imprint you choose," Haines adds. "If you need a soft hand and are using standard plastisol, you would use a higher mesh count and maybe an ink additive to thin out the viscosity of the ink. You can also achieve that same soft hand



Pony Xpress Printing (asi/78964; circle 112 on Free Info Card) creates slogan-style shirts for a number of licensed entertainment brands, including Myrtle Manor and the Travel Channel's ghost hunter Zak Bagans (left), as well as retail brands such as Cowboy Militia.

Photo courtesy of Pony Xpress Printing (asi/78964)

using waterbase and/or discharge inks."

Text designs, while straightforward, do not have to be boring. For certain promotions and audiences (depending on budget), you can upscale a text-only imprint with special effect inks and interesting techniques. "It really depends on the goal of the design or use of the shirt," says Bruce Jolesch, CEO of Pony Xpress Printing (asi/78964), which has printed this style of shirts for licensed apparel for reality TV shows. "Is it for a

special event or new product introduction? There are ways to elevate the imprint using glitter or gel or rhinestones."

Haines notes several ways to add interest to any one-color artwork: distressing, gradients, half-tone effect, outlining the text or using a drop shadow. Steve Kanney, president and owner of Target Decorated Apparel (asi/90549), agrees that a slogan-style design can be made all the more compelling with the right special effect inks. "Imagine using the slogan 'Cold Steel on Ice' and printing this shirt with a Soft Metal Ink," he says, "or the slogan 'Shhhhhzzzzle'" in a metallic foil or a gooey glitter or even rhinestones or sequins. Adding special effects that complement the slogan really help drive home the message and add interest to the finished garment."

If the design leans toward the modest side, Kanney says, direct-to-garment equipment can be used for small runs and then scaled up for basic manual presses and autos. "If special effects are used to drive home the slogan," he says, "then specialized art, separations and printing processes are often needed to execute a design of this nature."

NOT ALWAYS SIMPLE

Nick Ernst, production manager for Culture Studio, has managed many requests for the trendy look. "Slogan/text-style imprints are usually spot color, but that doesn't always mean they're simple," he says. "We are using mainly Murakami Smart Mesh, LX 150, LX 180 and the occasional LX 225 for our mesh count to help lay a nice solid layer of Rutland's High Opacity ink down."

"If you need a soft hand with standard plastisol, use a higher mesh count and maybe an ink additive to thin out the viscosity of the ink."

Megan Haines, MiddletownInk (asi/531055)



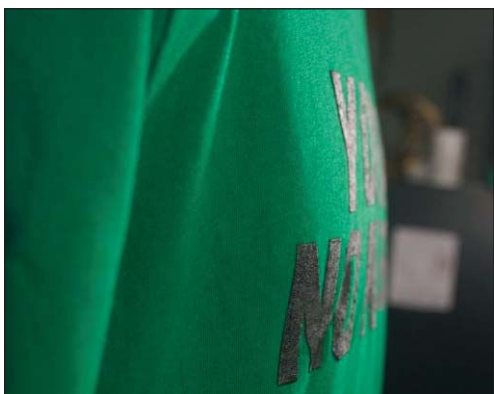
Special effect inks can punch up text designs. Target Decorated Apparel (asi/90549; circle 113 on Free Info Card) uses an ink called Ripped Metal that lets the Hummer logo stand out.

Photo courtesy of Target Decorated Apparel (asi/90549)



This slogan T-shirt for a bar/restaurant demonstrates the use of clear soft hand ink, giving the shirt a tonal effect. Decorated by Vantage Apparel (asi/93390; circle 106 on Free Info Card).

Photo courtesy of Vantage Apparel (asi/93390)



Especially for dark and colored shirts, using the right white base ink is essential for creating a smooth surface for slogan designs, says Culture Studio (circle 114 on Free Info Card).

Photo courtesy of Culture Studio

“When printing on dark/black T-shirts we always make sure to use the right white ink on the base screen.”

Nick Ernst, Culture Studio

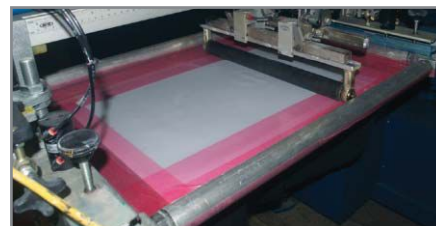
Culture Studio is working on a holographic slogan/text-style imprint that reveals different words depending on the angle from which the tee is viewed. Mainly, however, Culture Studio relies on the essentials. Ernst explains, “Today we are seeing a lot of imprints that are requiring a soft hand, as in they don’t want a thick imprint. To achieve a soft imprint, we start with the fundamentals, using the right white base ink for the right style of garment, so that you start with a nice smooth surface for the other colors. It’s not always about an interesting technique than it is about having the right technique.”

The technique depends on the shirt, particularly its color and fiber. “When printing on dark/black T-shirts we always make sure to use the right white ink on the base screen,” Ernst says. “This will provide the best coverage over the T-shirt fibers, creating a nice smooth surface to print the other colors on. After the base, a really important part is to make sure you do not over flash cure the shirt. (If you over flash the imprint, it could leave a rough text.) Then following a correctly flash cured imprint, we use a crush plate.” Done correctly, the right print takes the words right out of someone’s mouth and puts them on the shirt.

Tonia Kimbrough is a contributing writer for Wearables.

GET EQUIPPED

What’s the secret to pulling off great text designs? Using the right tools. Here are three key items.



A crush plate is a rubber cylinder that comes down on a regular screen, with a Teflon bottom, and rolls over the imprint to help smooth and soften the imprint, says Nick Ernst, production manager for Culture Studio. “This makes a huge difference in the quality of the imprint!” Available from M&R (circle 115 on Free Info Card).

Smartmesh from Murakami

(circle 116 on Free Info Card) maintains consistent mesh openings and resists both the initial pull of the squeegee as well as forces during the print stroke to preserve registration. “Murakami Smart Mesh retains tension the best, and the results are always consistent,” says Ernst.



The V-2000 4-station, 4-color manual press from Vastex (circle 117 on Free Info Card) simplifies text-only designs as well as numbering with the use of a DiGiT athletic numbering system. “Features of our equipment allow us to minimize turn-around time for each order,” says Megan Haines, co-owner of MiddletownInk.

HOW-TO

Print Over the Seams

BY THOMAS TRIMINGHAM

One of the most dramatic looks in screen printing is a large print that flows over the seams in unexpected ways. The customers love the way the print seems to become almost part of the garment. And it is easy to sell this look to clients without adding a lot of extra screens to the print. Achieving consistent success to printing over seams can be challenging, however, so it's useful to have a few hard-earned secrets in your corner when you decide to start printing this way.

The best way to quickly manage all of the variables in printing over seams is to break down and organize issues into three primary areas: Garment concerns, art issues and production variables. Once you have the different challenges isolated, you can then go through and define the highest-quality process for each problem to minimize the learning curve. With any process system, there are exceptions that will be outside of the suggested best practices. It is always advisable to test a new process prior to running a live job and establish a process log of garment, art and printing specifics to help with future production questions.

If a client requests a print that passes over the seam, it is important to note how concerned they are with the image being distorted or inconsistent. Some clients may not care at all and others may raise a fuss over a tiny smudge. It's a fine line addressing this issue during the sales process but also a necessary one. You don't want the client to be overly nitpicky on the final print, but it is better to prepare the situation and use some printed examples to show the over the seam variations rather than just surprise the client with the final result.

Even with the challenges, a successful print across the seams is not only a very dramatic look, it can also command a higher value than a traditional print if it is communicated to the client properly. Printing it on a higher-quality garment adds to the value and ensures that the quality of the print holds.



With the rising popularity of off-location printing, knowing how to print over the seams of garments is crucial.

GARMENT ISSUES

If you are able to pre-plan the printing, it is a great idea to acquire a sample of the garment to look at before you commit to that style. The amount of fabric on the inside of the shirt seams can vary dramatically depending on where and how the garment was manufactured. Some garments are far better

candidates for over-the-seam printing than others due to the seams being flatter, with less material on the inside, and a more consistent construction from seam to seam. It is hard to judge this without acquiring a sample product, and just because a garment commands a higher price doesn't make the seams easier to print over.

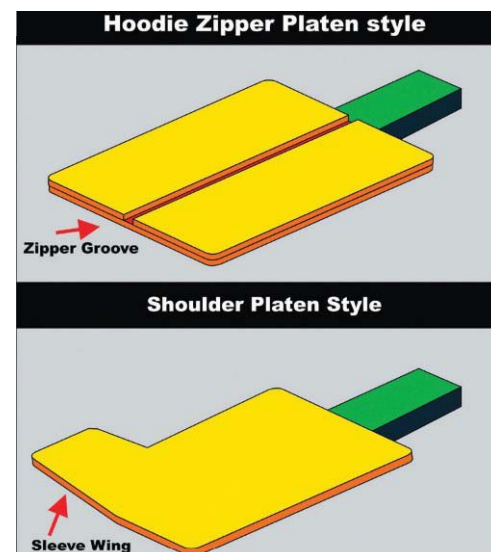
It also makes a difference which seams on



Step 2



Step 3



Step 4

the garment your design is going to overlap (Step 1). When it comes to collar seam printing, many shirts have a ribbed collar, which will distort the image, and tend to have large seams that will disrupt the print. Some brands have a very small collar seam and tight ribbed collar that sits low and is easier to print. The best way to know is to sample first and then keep a shirt of each style for later reference. Shoulder seams on T-shirts can be flat-sewn or reverse-stitched. Obviously, a flat seam is going to be easier to print over but it may distort the print if the stitching is large and the print is detailed. Hem seams will be less intrusive generally, but thicker hems could pose problems.

ART CONCERNS

The easiest way for artwork to print over the seams is to create forgiving designs where imperfections from an inconsistent surface will be less obvious. One way to accomplish this is to use a distress filter to overlap the artwork and break up any large areas of ink coverage so that the design looks worn out (Step 2). This way the final print will look broken up already, and it will be less of a dramatic difference if some areas don't print perfectly.

In addition, it can be useful to add a spatter or grunge effect outside of the image (Step 3). This can be done using a grunge stamp, brush or similar pattern. This extra effect can be beneficial if a design has sharp, geometric shapes that need some roughening up so a seam print will be less distorted.

There are other art concerns that are common sense issues, but still worth mentioning as reminders: Don't use important type or graphic elements on the seam print. Avoid using repetitive geometric shapes or small detailed graphics with fine lines. It is best to use elements that are background shapes, and not too critical.

PRODUCTION VARIABLES

Executing a print over a seam requires some choices to be made. How clean is the print expected to be? How many adjustments are going to be made to perfect the process?

A screen printer that decides to pursue fashion-related products and make this type of decoration a consistent part of his or her business will likely need to invest in some softer-coated platens. This will allow the garment seams to sink into the platen and create a more even printing surface. Another approach is to create grooves in the platens where the back side of the seams, collars, or zippers can be tucked so that the top of the printed surface is as level as possible (Step 4). Several companies, such as Action Engineering, make specialty platens and platen surfaces just for seam printing.

If you don't want to invest in more expensive equipment, a simple solution is to build up your platen using layers of cardboard tacked together and then cut grooves in it for the seams. (Be sure it's non-corrugated or the lines will show in the final prints).

The next issue to solve is the ink. Printing

over the seams on a garment tends to work the best when the ink is thinner and will absorb into the garment to a degree. There are exceptions to this rule that are design and garment specific, but overall, a print that flows into the fabric will tend to bleed out less and pull back up into the screen less if the ink is thinner.

The most common reason that prints over seams are returned or scrapped is that the ink blobs near the seam, or it doesn't print. Both of these issues can be moderated if the ink is thinner and printed into the garment. The biggest drawback to this, of course, is that on a dark garment the ink may no longer be opaque; the garment color will begin to show through and dull the print. For this specific reason, a lot of printers will opt for a waterbased print with a discharge agent if they are going to print over a darker garment's seams. They will then have less issues with the ink build up, it will feel much softer, and the final print will look more fashionable.

One final note: start simple with a one-color print and a forgiving design. This way you can learn to appreciate the challenges and practice one variable at a time.

Successful printing over the seams on a shirt isn't overly difficult if the garment is properly chosen, the artwork is designed well, and the printing surface is prepared in the right way. The final product will be a high-impact garment that grabs attention. *Thomas Trimmingham is a contributing writer for Wearables.*

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

The First Prints

From its very early beginnings with pennants, screen printing has spawned a massive industry.

BY ANDY MACDOUGALL

After 15 years of research, Swiss author Guido Lengwiler has released *A History of Screen Printing: How an Art Evolved into an Industry*. The book uncovers an unprecedented treasure trove of forgotten or lost information about the pioneers behind screen printing and the different products that were first produced once people figured out the process. It chronicles the birth of screen printing, which mostly took place in the U.S. at the dawn of the advertising age in the early 1900s, and follows its spread and growth around the world up to and including its use in WWII. What is most fascinating are the parallels between then and now. Screen printing launched entire industries, which it continues to do even today. iPhones and iPads can't exist without screen printing providing the interface for the touch screen (conductive inks are screen printed) and layering the miniature printed circuitry, making them light and cheap to manufacture. And, we all know it is the basis of the imprinted garment industry.

But before there were tourist and sports T-shirts, towels, hats, koozies and other printed items, there was the granddaddy of imprinted specialty advertising items: the pennant. In the late 1800s, as the American middle class expanded and tourism for the masses started to take hold, pennants were the big thing. For celebrations, destinations, colleges and institutions, demand for pennants soared. Lengwiler explores its pivotal role in his book:

"By the end of the 1800s, the pennants were being lettered with simple texts, such as the name of a city or a school. Each letter would be cut out individually from felt and sewn onto the pennant by hand, a time-consuming task. This production method called for fairly large letters, since small ones did not lend themselves to the sewing process. The ability to print on felt



Andy MacDougall is the editor of *A History of Screen Printing*. He is a screen-printing advocate, trainer and consultant based in the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island. He's a member of the Academy of Screen Printing Technology as well as the Specialty Graphic Imaging Association and the America Poster Institute. Contact him at andy@squeeegeville.com.



▲ This felt pennant from 1912 demonstrates the earliest techniques of screen printing. This pennant was printed from a photographic stencil with four-color brush and airbrush coloring.

made it possible to produce the pennants more efficiently, and opened up the creative possibilities to include illustrations as well.

"The screen printing pioneer Edward Owens described the situation as follows in 1927: 'As automobiles increased in numbers the custom of flaunting a pennant from the home town also became prevalent. It was immediately following this era that advertisers saw possibilities in the pennant for advertising their wares, but the limitations of the all-felt sewed pennant for pic-

tural [sic] illustration and small lettering was far from adequate for their purpose. It was with open arms that the advertiser took a new type of pennant which presently appeared. The 'innovation' was of the same general character as the college pennant, but in place of sewed letters it bore in paint colors a fairly representative illustration of a product and well executed lettering, sufficiently small to enable an advertising text to be displayed on the felt field. The tieless stencil made this possible.'



▲ This postcard from the 1910s shows the popularity of souvenir pennants, the first major screen-printed product.



“The changeover to screen printing took place within a short time: Until the late 1900s, pennants were still mostly being made with sewn-on lettering, but then the screen printing process, which was more economical and provided better ink coverage, took hold. Manufacturers in New York and the Midwest led the way. Examples of pennants dating from 1908 already exhibit high-quality screen printing work. After that time, only elaborately decorated pennants in small runs were still being made with sewn lettering.”

Screen printing changed the industry. It made the original practice of cutting and sewing letters for pennants obsolete. Painting by hand was too slow. The new silk-screen process offered manufacturers opacity and the ability to print fine detail – plus unprecedented production speeds. Once a manufacturer figured the process out, it was a closely guarded secret. These same manufacturers also adapted the process to create other novelties, and pretty soon an entire industry was created: advertising specialties. Inventive men and women in printing, signage and other industries started adapting the new process to print textiles and wall-paper in yardage, POP displays, billboards,

ceramics, instrument panels and printed electronics.

(If you look at the old pennant samples, you’ll see some are completely screen printed, and some are created with a combination using screen printing to put down an opaque white (underbase, anyone?) and airbrushing overtop. The detail of some of the original pennants is exquisite. Some of the work on early pre-WWI samples rivals screen printing we see 100 years later.)

I find the history of screen printing to be fascinating. But what can today’s screen printers learn from the pioneers?

The first lesson is never give up. They had a vision and idea, and kept going until they perfected it and made it work. And once mastered, they didn’t stop. They kept finding new uses for the process, and inventing new machines and techniques to make it work better. Luckily, we don’t have to reinvent the wheel – but I tell you, looking at the setups they came up with in 1920 and looking at how they do it now, in some cases, not much has changed.

The second lesson is adaptability of process. First there were pennants, which quickly turned into show cards and small signs, which morphed into billboards, then

ceramics and glass printing and containers, then textiles and later printed T-shirts, and of course the whole gamut of printed electronics. Each discovery of a new application led to another. Anybody who says the process is dead only needs to look around. From your car to your cell phone to solar cells and nicotine patches – all those things started from printing a pennant. Resourceful screen printers will find more applications to tackle, for sure.

The third lesson? We are engaged in a hidden process that not many understand, except the people who use it directly. It will never be mainstream. It is doomed to be splintered, and some will dismiss it as archaic. Don’t fight it. Let the others rush to buy their digital printers. Meanwhile, enjoy yourself, screen printer. You get to print money.

– A History of Screen Printing is available at <http://www.squeegeeville.com/explore/history-of-screenprinting>. The English version is distributed by ST Publications. Guido Lengwiler is a teacher of screen printing at Bern and Biel School of Design in Switzerland. He was elected to the Academy of Screen and Digital Printing Technology (ASDPT) in 2009 for his work on the History of Screen Printing.

EQUIPMENT CORNER

The latest in machines and decoration products

PRESSES

► New Fusion Heat Press – Hotronix

The new Fusion heat press from Hotronix (circle 132 on Free Info Card) allows the user to choose between swing-away or draw-style operation with 360-degree open access to the lower platen. With the ability to thread a garment onto the press by splitting the bottom of the shirt and sliding it on, the heat press increases productivity.



TRANSFERS



▲ Baseball Helmet Decals – Dalco Athletic

Dalco Athletic (circle 134 on Free Info Card) is offering new baseball decals in single letters, numbers or custom styles. The single letter and number decals can be done in one of eight of the most popular athletic stock type faces. The custom style is created from your provided custom artwork.



◀ Baseball/Softball Clip Art –Transfer Express

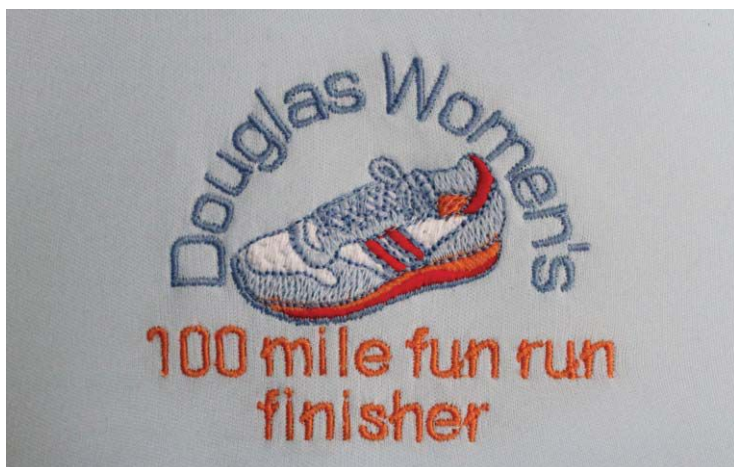
Transfer Express (asi/91804; circle 133 on Free Info Card) is bringing in new baseball and softball clipart and layouts to their website for 2014. The company's Easy Prints format allows a transfer to be made by choosing a layout and then changing the text, art, and colors. To see the additions, visit the website at www.TransferExpress.com.

EMBROIDERY MACHINES & SUPPLIES



▲ Multi-head Embroidery Machine – Hirsch International

Hirsch International (asi/14982; circle 136 on Free Info Card) is offering the TMAR-KC, a multi-head automatic embroidery machine. The machine features a digitally controlled presser foot that adjusts to the fabric thickness making it easier to sew on a wide array of fabric types. Additionally, it features a newly designed middle thread guide that allows for setting tension in half the time as could be done on the conventional thread guide. There is also a specialty thread attachment that makes it easier to embroider using thick thread. Learn more at www.hic.us.



▲ Performance Fabric Stabilizer – GSG

Graphic Solutions Group (circle 137 on Free Info Card) provides a cutaway stabilizer that is designed to facilitate embroidering on performance wear. Made of 50% polyester/50% rayon, Tech Weave stretches with the fabric, reducing the stress on stitching. Additionally, the stabilizer offers low shrinkage, which decreases puckering and provides a stable foundation that keeps stitches looking sharp and in registration. Visit www.GOGSG.com.

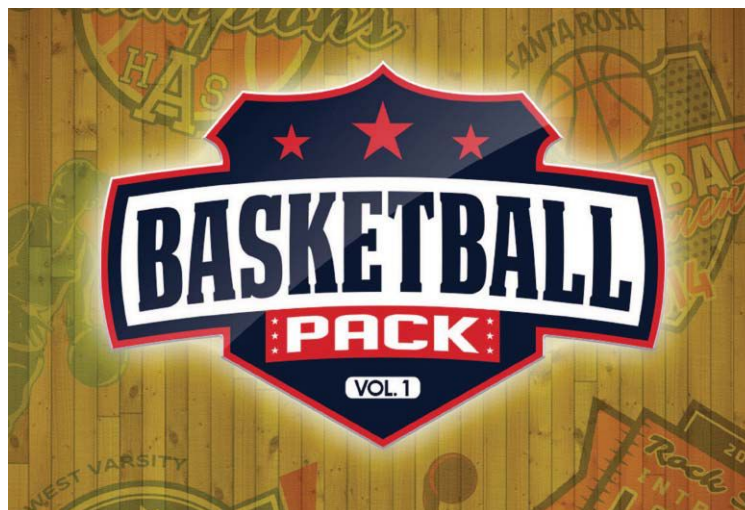
INKS



▲ Special Effect Ink – PolyOne

Willflex Epic HD Sharp Clear by PolyOne (circle 131 on Free Info Card) is a non-phthalate special effect clear developed to create high resolution graphics with sharp detail. Epic HD Sharp Clear can be used in high density applications and blended with other texture inks to create unique textures and design effects. Super straight-edge definition, excellent sharp corner precision and a satin finish with dry hand feel bring Epic HD Sharp Clear to the forefront of innovation in specialty printing.

CLIP ART



▲ Basketball Pack Design – ClipArtBoom

ClipArtBoom (circle 136 on Free Info Card) aims to provide basketball teams and fans cutting-edge looks with the brand new Basketball Pack Volume 1. This design pack features modern and diverse styles that empower decorators to mix and match clip art, backgrounds, fonts and colors to create production-ready graphics. Royalty-free, the designs can be used for screen printing and digital printing including direct-to-garment, inkjet and laser digital transfers, and print and cut. Visit www.clipartboom.com

ARTWORK

Smoke Signals

BY SABRINA LANDRY

Mojo Art & Image (circle 77 on Free Info Card) is a relatively new company based in Baltimore, Maryland that specializes in screen printing, embroidery and a wide array of specialty products for any branding need. Buck Wear Inc., a frequent customer of the company, commissioned the decorator to print the Smoke Deer men's

T-shirt, which has become a best-seller in its line for over two years now. "The Smoke Deer was designed to appeal to the whitetail deer hunter and really endeavors to capture the crucial moment of the hunt with minimal imagery," says Kevin Wise, production manager of Mojo.



No Meshing Around

This is a seven color design, printed with Rutland plastisol M3 series ink. "Printing it with high 230 and 305 mesh helped to keep the fine detail," explains Wise. The smoke is a combination of the underbase, wet white, and gray. The casing is a combination of the underbase, tan, yellow, brown, and black.

The 'Shape' of Things

Want a soft hand to the high-opacity inks while keeping the colors vivid? Use an additive called "Shape." "It's pretty much a thinner plastisol ink without pigment," says Wise. "The high-opacity M3 inks are based out with some Shape to give the shirt a soft feel without taking away the brightness of any color."

Blowing Smoke

A lot of the images used on the shirt are derived from original photographs. The shell casing, for example, is real. It was photographed and retouched in Adobe Photoshop. The team at Buck Wear wanted to use actual images for a more striking visual. "The smoke, deer, and lettering were derived from multiple images of smoke that were manipulated, and digitally painted in Photoshop using Wacom tablet and stylus," says Wise.



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RSN #.....Page #	RSN #.....Page #
A/4 Moshay Inc asi/30121..... 1.....2, 3	Hanes/Champion asi/59528..... 14..... 11
Alphabroder asi/34063..... 3..... 15	iClick Decorate asi/63125..... 15..... Bellyband
American Apparel asi/35297..... 2..... 1	Jerzees..... 22..... CV4
AnaJet Inc asi/16000..... 33..... 14	Keya USA asi/64602..... 31..... 12
Anvil® asi/36350..... 10..... 5	L A T Sportswear asi/65948..... 16..... 61
Blazers R Us..... 30..... 63	McCreary's Tees asi/69885..... 17..... 37
Charles River Apparel asi/44620..... 4..... 49	New Balance asi/56842..... 9..... 4
Delta Apparel Inc asi/49172..... 5..... CV3	Next Level Apparel asi/73867..... 18..... 31
Dickies Occupational Wear asi/49675..... 6..... 27	Outdoor Cap Co asi/75420..... 19..... 36
Dyenomite asi/51185..... 7..... 63	Pacific Sportswear & Emblems..... 28..... 63
Edwards Garment Co asi/51752..... 8..... 22	Pizzazz asi/78230..... 21..... 63
Fawn Embroidery Services Inc asi/702575..... 27..... 63	S & S Activewear asi/84358..... 23..... 17
Fruit of the Loom..... 29..... 35	SanMar asi/84863..... 24..... 19
Gildan asi/56842..... 32..... 7	Stouse Inc asi/89910..... 25..... 63
Gildan Performance asi/56842..... 11..... 6	Stouse Inc asi/89910..... 26..... 63
Hanes/Champion asi/59528..... 12..... CV2	Tingley Rubber Corporation asi/91222..... 34..... 29
Hanes/Champion asi/59528..... 13..... 9	

Wearables MARCH 2014; Vol. 18, No. 3. (ISSN 1096-3766) (USPS 18113) is published monthly except bi-monthly in April/May and November/December by Advertising Specialty Institute, 4800 Street Road, Treose PA 19053-6698. Periodical postage paid at Langhorne, PA and additional offices. Subscription rates: free and controlled circulation to qualified subscribers. Non-qualified persons may subscribe at the following rates: USA, 1 year, \$35, 2 years, \$69. Canada, 1 yr, \$39. Outside USA and Canada, 1 yr, \$41 (\$96 airmail delivery). POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Wearables, PO Box 2197, Skokie, IL 60076.

MARCH 2014 WEARABLES READER SERVICE NUMBERS

For products in editorial content

SUPPLIERS..... RS #..... Page #		
A&P Master Images..... 104..... 23, 26	Driving Impressions..... 129..... 43	Outdoor Cap Co..... 121..... 42
AlightPromos.com..... 83..... 34	Edwards Garment Co..... 82..... 25	PolyOne..... 131..... 59
Alternative Apparel..... 99..... 26	Eva Sportswear..... 79..... 32	Pony Xpress Printing..... 112..... 52
AMC Special Markets..... 103..... 27	Fersten Worldwide Inc..... 98..... 26	River's End Trading Company 109..... 25
American Apparel..... 120..... 32, 40	Footprints USA..... 122..... 42	Rothco..... 97..... 26, 41
Anvil..... 139..... 50	Golden Goods..... 119..... 40	Rugged Outfitters Inc..... 88..... 21, 23
Apparelstar..... 126..... 41	Graphic Solutions Group..... 137..... 59	S&S Activewear..... 76..... 32
Ash City..... 105..... 25	Hammacher Schlemmer..... 87..... 21	SanMar..... 95..... 26, 40
Ash City USA..... 93..... 23	Hanes Branded Printwear ... 138..... 48	SanMar Canada..... 94..... 23
Assertive Creativity..... 118..... 40	Hind Team Sports..... 128..... 43	Sparkle Plenty Designs..... 92..... 21
Aurum Organic..... 78..... 32	Hirsch International..... 136..... 59	Stahls' ID Direct..... 80..... 32, 51
Bandanna Promotions..... 123..... 42	Hotronix..... 132..... 58	T Productions Inc..... 140..... 13
Big Bang Corporate Apparel. 110..... 25, 43	J. America..... 130..... 43	Target Decorated Apparel ... 113..... 53
Bishop the Garment Co..... 125..... 41	Landway..... 127..... 41	The Corporate Marketplace Inc102..... 27
Bodek and Rhodes..... 81..... 13, 33	Mak Group of Companies/ Tomahawk Brand..... 124..... 42	Transfer Express..... 133..... 58
Broberry Mfg Inc..... 89..... 21	Mojo Art & Image..... 77..... 60	Tri-Mountain..... 107..... 25
Clava American..... 100..... 26	M&R..... 115..... 53	Trimark Sportswear Group... 108..... 25
ClipArtBoom..... 136..... 59	Murakami..... 116..... 53	Vantage Apparel..... 106..... 25, 53
Culture Studio..... 114..... 53	OT Sports..... 84..... 37	Vastex..... 117..... 53
Dalco Athletic..... 134..... 58	Ouray Sportswear..... 96..... 26	Whispering Pines Sportswear 111..... 25
Dickies..... 101..... 26		

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A Comfortable Decision

ImageSeller (asi/230143) has been doing business with Brown-Forman, an American-owned spirits and wine company, for over a decade. The partnership has been a huge success, as Brown-Forman added creative and design responsibilities to ImageSeller's duties in addition to sourcing. Those creative capabilities came into play last year when the spirits company was looking to shake up the merchandising for its Southern Comfort liqueur as part of a rebranding. "They wanted to offer the field unique T-shirt designs for the 2014 Fiscal Year," says Lisa Tupy, senior designer at ImageSeller. This request meant that Tupy's team needed to work fast and efficiently.

It was important to make their final product stand out to the brand, especially with limited time to go back to the drawing board, so Tupy and the ImageSeller team took a unique approach to the initial unveiling of their designs. "We presented the prototyped T-shirts to Southern Comfort, instead of a paper presentation with visuals," says Tupy. "We carefully selected the color, weight and style of the shirts to compliment the design as well as the screen-printing

technique being used." The prototype solutions ranged from off-the-chart unique to conservative yet sleek. They featured a number of different design styles and decoration techniques, including distressed screen printing, embroidery, flocking and more.

Ultimately, Southern Comfort chose two designs that featured key parts of the company's identity, including its founding date and logo. The drinkmaker was so impressed by the attention to every detail and the unity of the project as a whole that it decided to go with the initial prototype shown at the presentation, something Tupy had hoped for in the initial planning. "We were able to go into production and delivery within four weeks of the presentation," she says.

The attention given to everything – the fabric of the T-shirts, the appealing and complimentary coloring and the range of prototypes shown for the initial presentation – meant no doubling back or additional design work necessary. "Going the extra step with our presentation was key to the success of this pitch," says Tupy. She adds: "The excitement generated from this presentation has also opened the door to design work for other brands." – *Sabrina Landry*

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