

Power Players

Meet 75 People Who Are Shaking Up the Decorated Apparel Industry



↪ Echo One One Jacket (CCWJ01) in Bark provided by Berne Apparel (asi/40260)

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FEATURES

Cover Story 38 2015 Power 75

Stitches reveals its sixth-annual list of the most powerful people and companies in the industry today. Ranked from 1 to 75, each is influencing the direction of the decoration industry in 2016 and beyond.

The Power Poll 56

Power 75 members share their goals for the new year and speculate on what the future holds for the industry.

INTERACT

Stitches.com 14

Trending topics: Tips on good hiring practices; the importance of following trends; how sustainability affects your bottom line; and more.

Pinterest.com/wearablesmag 15

What's hot from our Appliqué & Multimedia and Embroidered Art & Home Accessories boards.

Instagram.com/wearablesmag 16

Embroidery on unconventional materials – an old newspaper, a tennis racket and even a tortilla.

Letters 17

Readers share their New Year's resolutions; sell apparel decorated with ham radio call signs; and more.

Expert Weigh-In 18

Charlie Taublieb, screen-printing consultant, talks about optimal showroom setup, common mistakes of mid-level shops and up-and-coming leaders in textiles.

Phil Stitch Answers 19

Phil finds barn coats; fleece-lined baseball caps; and more.

33



NEWS

Industry 20

Pro Towels to expand production facility; political ad spending expected to grow; and survey reveals B2B buying influences.

World 21

Trending topics: Garment factory owners indicted in Bangladesh; a Chilean artist transforms photos with embroidery; and a museum exhibit showcases historic vestments.

Strategy 22

Ukrainian native launches embroidered fashion line; fundraiser brings over \$100,000 for slain cop's family; Embroidery Coach helps Michigan firm; and more.

DECORATING SOLUTIONS

5 Steps 25

Learn how to create a PennFlex patch.

Decorating & Fabric Trends 26

Hot topics: A new look for custom embroidery; and target the growing vape market with plastisol transfers from The Wild Side.

Machine & Software Upgrades 27

WebJaguar offers an e-commerce solution; Insta Graphic offers a small-format heat press; and more.

Saving 9 28

Quick tips: Consider hiring part-time help to keep costs low; put a fresh spin on varsity jackets; and more.

LOOK BOOK

Apparel Trends 30

Quilted jackets, hoodies, the color stormy gray, punky studs and sparkles.

Showcase 34

The latest tote and bag styles to decorate and sell.

Niche 35

Resort and hospitality.

Inspiration 36

Quilter Stacy Rausch incorporates embroidery, paint, paper and other media into her art quilts.

Coming Next Issue 63

What to look forward to in January 2016 *Wearables*.

Ask an Expert 64

An expert offers advice on reviewing 2015 and getting revved up to make improvements in the new year.

Design: Hillary Glen
Photography: Mark Prickett
Model: Christopher Bennett
Echo One One Jacket (CCWJ01),
Berne Apparel (asi/40260)

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ABOUT THE COVER

A Powerful Jacket By Sara Lavenduski

Each year, to round out a year of publication, *Stitches* releases its Power 75 list of the decorated-apparel industry's movers and shakers. To commemorate the collective ambition, creativity and innovation of those who made the list this year, we're featuring the Echo One One Jacket (CCWJ01) from Berne Apparel (asi/40260), with left-chest embroidery designed by Virginia Lucas, ASI's interactive designer for user experience. It serves as a sturdy cotton canvas workwear jacket with the added benefit of the Dual Adder System, which allows wearers to conceal pistols safely on the exterior of the garment for quick availability if the need arises.

"There are currently more than 11 million concealed carry

permit holders in the U.S.," says Jeff Clark, promotional products market segment coordinator for Berne Apparel. "This jacket is designed to look and function like daily workwear, while still providing a tactical advantage to legal weapon-carrying citizens. They've been well received by law enforcement, particularly for off-duty and undercover needs."

When Lucas was asked to design the logo for the jacket, she started with a number of sketches. "I wanted to figure out how to integrate the text and the digits," she explains. "They just seemed too separate to me. I then decided to put 'Power' over the top of the numbers to complete the digits. I had finally hit on a design that was fresh, interesting and engaging."

Ingenious Design

The Echo One One Jacket (CCWJ01) from Berne Apparel (circle 78 on Free Info Card) features two insulated cargo pockets with snap closures and an interior Velcro retainment system for keeping weapons secure. "It's an ambidextrous design," Clark says. "This is the only workwear garment on the market with this type of technology."

Focus on Fonts

"I knew the design would eventually be embroidered," Lucas says, "so I chose a typeface that would embroider well, without thin lines, and I chose orange and white so the colors would jump off the black jacket."

Decoration Tip

When embroidering workwear, Clark recommends using thread from Madeira USA. "It holds up well to most of the environments in which our clientele work," he says. "We find that the most common embellishment on workwear jackets is a left-chest design with 2,000 to 4,000 stitches."





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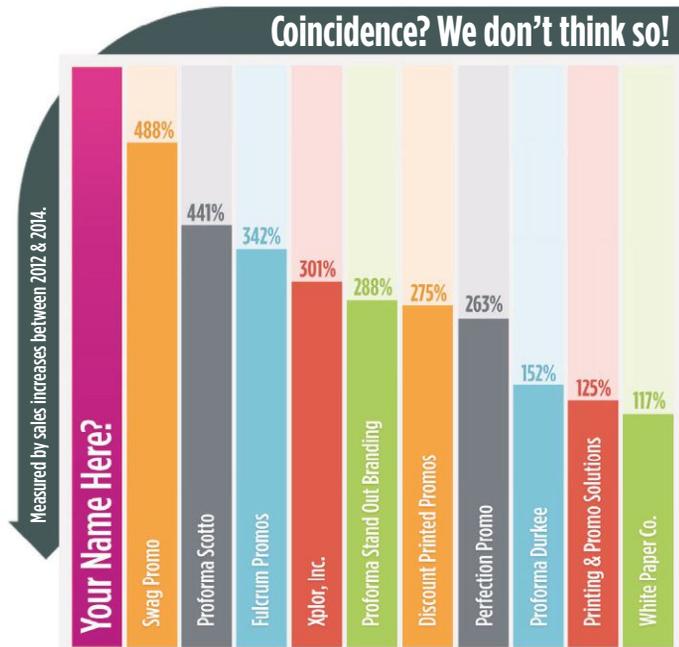


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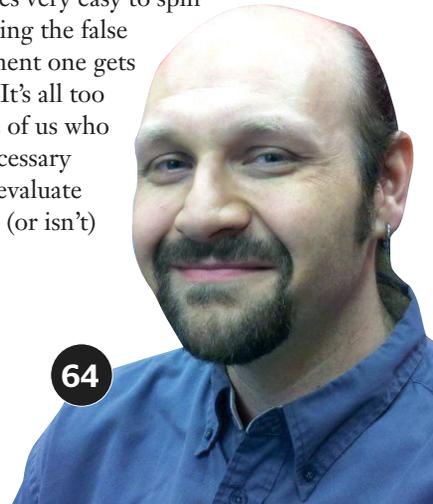
In this month's "Expert Weigh-In" section of our "Interact" department, we hear from **CHARLIE TAUBLIEB**, president of Taublieb Consulting in Greenwood Village, CO, who has almost 40 years of experience in the screen-printing industry. "When I paint, I work with acrylics as well, and mix in other media such as caviar beads and metal to have a unique look," he says. "Working with screen printers, I encourage them to do the same, mixing screen printing with embroidery, for example, and trying different shirt treatments together to be able to present a variety of looks to a client. The more you stand out in a crowd, the better."



36

STACY RAUSCH, a graphic designer from Arlington, VA, was trained as a photographer, but after taking a class at a craft supply store, she has begun experimenting with mixed-media art quilts. "I've always been an artist who dabbled in lots of different media, so adding fiber to the mix really wasn't that much of a stretch," she says. "I've painted fiber, cut it, torn it apart, glued it to paper. It's moldable, pliable and forgivable. If you're looking for something sturdier than paper, fiber might be your solution."

In this issue's "Ask an Expert," **ERICH CAMPBELL**, digitizer/e-commerce manager at NM-based Black Duck Embroidery and Screen Printing (asi/700415), talks about taking stock as one year ends and another begins. It's important to measure and evaluate your business on a daily, weekly and monthly basis: "There's no other way to really know where you stand," he writes. "It becomes very easy to spin one's wheels chasing the false sense of achievement one gets from being busy. It's all too inviting for those of us who grind to do unnecessary work if we don't evaluate what that work is (or isn't) achieving."



64

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We've Got Big Plans



In 2016 *Stitches* turns 30 years old – and I'm excited to share the next chapter in the magazine's long, storied and award-winning (we've taken home more than 40 national journalism awards) life with you. Starting with the next issue, *Stitches* and *Wearables* magazines are merging to become the industry's largest publication serving the decorated-apparel industry. For the last six months, I've worked with our design team and Editorial Advisory Board to dream up the expanded *Wearables* that I'll head up as editor – marrying the best and most popular content from both magazines. I can't wait for you to get it in your mailboxes and inboxes next month.

In 2006, ASI acquired *Stitches* and *Wearables*, and a decade later, we're ready to unveil this powerhouse magazine that will serve embroiderers, screen printers and apparel-focused distributors. I'm glad that the last issue of *Stitches* in this format is the Power 75, our chance to celebrate the year's most dedicated educators, innovative manufacturers, creative apparel suppliers, decorators, fashion icons and more. Along with sharing their stories, they weigh in on what 2016 has in store for the industry.

In the 2016 *Wearables*, you'll see familiar departments like "Interact," along with revamped and reimagined sections like "Trends" (the hottest decorated apparel around), "Business" and "Wearable Technology." Plus, in every issue we'll bring you big dedicated sections for decorators: "Embroidery Solutions" and "Screen-Printing Success." That's in addition to our special issues: Apparel Design Awards, The Machine Guide, The Software Issue, SourceBook, Big Fashion Issue and The State of the Decorated-Apparel Industry.

Over the last five years, *Stitches* has won six national awards for its forward-thinking social media strategy, blogs and online engagement. We're bringing this same strong social media vision to *Wearables* – and we'll continue to build a large, dynamic and interactive online community on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest. Plus, we'll debut a weekly e-newsletter, sending you the freshest business-building content on Monday mornings.

As the glittering ball drops on New Year's Eve, I'll toast to the 2016 *Wearables* (the vision of the decorated-apparel industry) and all the great new information and tools we'll bring you to grow your businesses.

Nicole M. Rollender

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Compiled by Sara Lavenduski and Patricia Cangelosi

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STITCHES



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Stitches Senior Staff Writer Theresa Hegel discusses some key findings from this year's Power Poll. Find out what the Power 75 members have to say about the industry in 2016. Watch on *Stitches.com*.



Podcast: Seeking Solutions

Hirsch International (asi/14982) CEO Paul Gallagher talks to Senior Writer Theresa Hegel about the popularity of the company's Solutions Studio and how the Power 75 member plans to stay on top in 2016. Listen on *Stitches.com*.



Hire Power

Finding a promising employee for the shop floor takes skill and a good eye for potential. Training can seal the deal. Read about how to hire well and set up an effective training program on *Stitches.com*.

SOCIAL FEEDS



WE POSTED

Pittsburgh-based Pro Towels is expanding its South Carolina production facility, investing \$1.7 million to complete several upgrades: bit.ly/1Kwv82g

Meet the 104-year-old "guerrilla knitter" Grace Brett and her awesome yarn bombing: bit.ly/1Kqz8jG

These embroidered photographs by artist Maurizio Anzeri are wild. What do you think? bit.ly/1QTk2pa

Terry Town is offering free ground shipping on orders of \$600 and above until Dec. 24: bit.ly/stitches_terrytown

Inventive embroidery breathes new life into any accessory. Get inspired by this slideshow from *Vogue*: vogue.cm/1WdtwP1

"My mom was sick, pregnant with twins and already had twins. I had to leave school in the sixth grade to care for her. There was no work for a woman who is uneducated. But I knew how to embroider and here I can teach other women." bit.ly/1QTkhjZ

An interesting story behind this historical embroidery: bit.ly/1J7nje4

InkSoft has formed a strategic partnership with PCNA and Ryonet: bit.ly/1Pt4HL1



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Health incentive programs increasing productivity: ow.ly/SOHwh

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Ukrainian #embroidery seems to be all the rage: www.vogue.com.au/fashion/trends/how+this+ukrainian+label+became+an+instagram+success+story,37487 ... #fashion

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VIDEO: Michael J. Fox and his "Back to the Future Part II" co-stars gather in NYC for "Back to the Future" day: <http://apne.ws/1LHFvgL>

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One Reason Women Aren't Getting the Promotion: They Don't Want It. bloom.bg/1KGynRe via @business

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The Science of People Who Love to Write goo.gl/aqQOSI by @RachelS Grate via @MicNews #BenefitsofWriting #Word #WriteforHealth

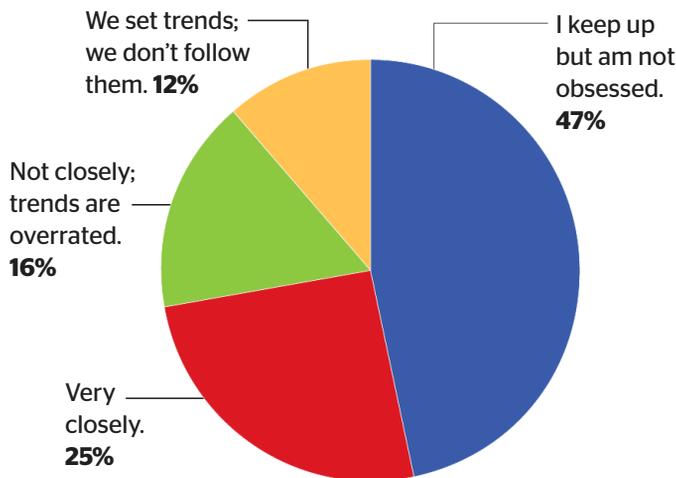
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"You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough." - Mae West #QuoteOfTheDay #NAR #QOTD #FridayFaves

INDUSTRY POLL

At *ASICentral.com*, we recently asked:

How closely do you follow retail trends when updating your product line?



Visit <http://bit.ly/1VohVdw> to read the entire blog entry by Theresa Hegel, senior writer for *Stitches*.

BLOG EXCERPT

The Stitchwork Blog Seeking a Sustainable Solution for Stabilizer



I was speaking with industry consultant Marshall Atkinson not too long ago about sustainability. If you know Atkinson at all, you'll know that he's a huge proponent of going green – as a way to help both the environment and your bottom line. "People think it costs them money to go green," says the chief operating officer of Milwaukee-based Visual Impressions. "In actuality, once you start doing this stuff, you realize you're wasting so much that you're just blowing money out your door."

Pinterest

Check out the following designs that we pinned on Stitches' Pinterest page – from the *Appliqué & Multimedia* and *Embroidered Art & Home Accessories* Boards.

Visit Stitches' Pinterest page – and all our great boards – at Pinterest/wearablesmag.

From the Board: Appliqué & Multimedia



Bomber jacket features boucle appliqué faces, from Haculla, haculla.com.



Distressed washed cotton twill cap (3312) has a precurved visor, contrast stitching and appliqué design, from Dri Duck Traders Inc. (asi/50835), driduck.com.



Boys' washable cotton sweater has an appliqué elephant that wraps to the back, from Mulberribush Kids Clothing, mulberribushkids.com.



Long-sleeve sweatshirt features screen-printing, embroidery and beading details, from H&M, hm.com.

From the Board: Embroidered Art & Home Accessories



Handmade wall art features silk ribbon embroidery, by EmbroiderySilkRibbon on Etsy, etsy.com.



Landscape embroidery incorporates embroidery, yarn and wool, by artist Ana Teresa Barboza, anateresabarboza.blogspot.fr.



This pillow was hand-embroidered in India using 30 thread colors, from Windowpanes Home & Garden, windowpanesmdi.com.

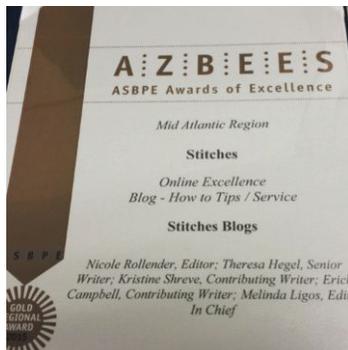


These high-quality luxury cotton towels feature swallow silhouettes, from Aneesi, aneesi.co.uk.

Instagram

Check out the following photos from Stitches' Instagram page.

Visit Stitches' Instagram page: @wearablesmag



Woohoo! Our bloggers rock. We took a regional gold #Azbee for Stitches' blogs.



These bibs are too cute. #regram from @scavengerannie #embroidery



Ready for her close-up. Regram from @goodfornothingembroidery #embroidery



A nicer way to say #byefelicia from @gulushthreads. Love the majestic background. #embroidery #regram



Another look at my wacky #ducttape hat.



Very cool embellished denim from @goodfornothingembroidery. #embroidery



#tbt to my day in the life with #fashion designer @byronlarsbm. Have you read the story in Stitches yet?



A fun way to recycle yesterday's news. Better than lining your birdcage anyway. #regram from @oldnewsdesign. #embroidery #newspaper



Sometimes, you have to think outside the hoop. Love this #embroidery by @fiance_knowles. #regram



Fun #yardsale find: hand-embroidered ring. #embroidery #jewelry



Very cool snakes! #regram from @ironthread



Is it lunchtime yet? How about some embroidered tortilla, via @frost.maya. #embroidery

Letters

What's your New Year's resolution for your business, and why?

Medical Necessity

My New Year's resolution is to print and embroider as many shirts as we can so I can pay for my wife's medical bills and probable upcoming brain surgery.

Michael D. Savino

The Savino Group LLC, Stephenson, VA

Expansion Plans

We're focusing on building up our customer service team and doing even more advertising next year, especially now that we've been in our new location and have our production team running top-notch. We need more customer service reps to keep our staff even busier. The advertising will keep our name moving all over and get more sales through the door. Next year, we're shooting for our largest growth ever. We're looking to grow by \$500K next year.

Howard Potter

A&P Master Images (asi/702505), Utica, NY

Finding Balance

I don't believe in New Year resolutions.

However, I do set goals for myself. One is to attend more free webinars that relate to my passion of embroidery. I will also look into the possibilities of teaching. I plan to attend carefully selected professional networking events in my area. And as always, I'll continue to work on maintaining a balance of hours dedicated to studio time, and all so-important inspirational time and activities to further perfect my craft.

Geri Finio

Studio 187, Edgewater, MD

Stitches readers sound off: New Beginnings

I own and operate Agape Embroidery out of my home. I have a small customer base at present. I've experienced some health problems and since I'm the only employee, I wasn't able to build the business. Now, I'm beginning again. I love *Stitches* magazine and I get a lot of ideas out of it.

Jonie Alleson

Agape Embroidery, Palm Bay, FL

On the Go

My husband and I started an embroidery business as full-time RVers. We're ham radio operators and we sell hats and T-shirts with names and call signs as we travel and attend Amateur Radio Hamfests in the Southwest. We love your magazine!

Paula Haberer

B.P.H. Embroidery, Golden, CO

Helpful Tips

I'm just starting out with a home-based business that makes baby accessory items and personalizes them with embroidery. I love reading *Stitches* because it gives me lots of helpful hints about getting my business going.

Kathie O'Keefe

Kathie's Collections, Melbourne Beach, FL

TALK TO US!

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

VOILA!

The best piece I ever embroidered

"Back in the 1970s and 1980s, I drove a school bus manufactured by Crown Coach Corp. Later, when I started doing artwork in 1994, I was asked by a school district to rework some art for screen-printed jackets, which happened to be a Crown school bus. At the time, this was only yellow ink on a black jacket, but I later decided to rework the entire art into full-color.

When I started embroidery in 2000, I always wanted to digitize and sew out the Crown school bus, but I just never had the time. Then in 2003, a school bus driver from Southern California contacted me about embroidering jacket backs for them. She had seen the Crown Bus on my website as a graphic and they wanted the same art in thread, so now I had a reason to digitize and sew it.

I first digitized it with Brother BES-100E software and then sewed it out on a Brother 12-needle single-head BES-1216AC. It measures 274mm wide by 140.9mm high and is made of 81,127 stitches of Madeira USA Polyneon thread with 10 colors and 49 color changes.

I've sewn it out a few times since the initial order. I believe I'm the only digitizer/embroiderer that has a detailed version of a Crown school bus."



Submitted by Bill Hoff, owner of Hillside Graphics & Embroidery in Fresno, CA; info@hillsidegraphics.com; www.hillsidegraphics.com

I INTERACT

Expert Weigh-In



Charlie Taublieb, president of Taublieb Consulting in Greenwood Village, CO, has almost 40 years of experience in the screen-printing industry, and currently specializes in technical screen-printing consulting for textile printers. He talks about optimal showroom setup, common mistakes of mid-level shops and up-and-coming leaders in textiles.

I encourage screen printers to think outside the box.

When I paint, I work with acrylics as well, and mix in other media such as caviar beads and metal to have a unique look. Working with screen printers, I encourage them to do the same, mixing screen printing with embroidery, for example, and trying different shirt treatments together to be able to present a variety of looks to a client. The more you stand out in a crowd, the better.

A shop's need for a graphic artist often depends on its size.

For smaller shops, it's important that they have someone who's capable of running the various software programs available and has some ideas about design. For larger shops, I'm not sure if you can get enough done without a staff artist.

Don't be cheap with equipment, and make sure you know what software you're buying.

When purchasing equipment, overbuy. What you need today may not be enough for tomorrow. With art, test out any new design or separation software before purchasing it to see if it does all that it's supposed to. If it works and will save you time and increase your expertise, buy it.

Textile and garment manipulation is a way for a shop to differentiate itself from the competition.

I think the more you know and can show, the more you can charge and separate yourself from other shops. Offering a client a variety of options should make it easier to make sales.

Impress customers with an optimally designed showroom.

Your showroom should look very organized and clean. Frame some of the best prints you and your staff have done, especially complex work and those from recognizable companies. Some companies display work that has been done in their R&D department so they can show some less-than-common techniques. Have samples of these that you can give away. If you've won awards or have been mentioned in print, display the articles and awards.

The critically important screen department can go a long way to avoid shop mistakes.

The department that's critical and usually in need of the most training is a shop's screen department. It's where I spend the bulk of my time when consulting. Printers will incorrectly expose emulsion, use low-tension screens, have no drying cabinet – the list can go on for a while. Bad screens translate into bad reproduction of artwork, downtime on the press, low-quality work and reduced profits, just to name a few.

Water-based inks are important to understand, based on current design trends.

I like all inks, but with the trends today, it's important to understand and work with water-based inks, including discharge. I'm

not sure you can avoid any, but it's important to understand how to get the most out of the different types available.

The coolest work I've seen recently...

came from a company in Russia doing four-color process water-based ink on top of a discharge underlay with 150 LPI going through 305 mesh and getting results that are amazing. It's so good, they won Best of Show at the last SGIA Golden Image Awards. I had nothing to do with teaching them how to do this.

I'm always excited to see the latest work from...

Dane Clement from Great Dane Graphics in Louisiana. I've been working with him for years and I feel he is one of the best artists in the industry because his artwork has to work in all shops. As for printers, there are quite a few, but the one that stands out most to me in this country is Andy Anderson, owner of Anderson Studio Inc., in Nashville.

I'm privileged to be able to see new designers coming down the pike.

As a judge for SGIA and *Impressions*, I get to see a lot of really great-looking work. I love shirt treatments and mixed-media work. Latitudes in Portland, OR, is my oldest ongoing client, and they always come up with fantastic techniques.

“The department that's critical and usually in need of the most training is a shop's screen department.”

Charlie Taublieb, *Taublieb Consulting*



Got a question for Phil?

If you can't find what you're looking for in the 2015 Sourcing Guide, write to: *Wearables*, Attn: Phil Stitch, 4800 Street Rd., Treose, PA 19053. Or fax your question to (215) 953-3107. For the quickest response, email askphil@asicentral.com.

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

You are the best at finding the impossible. Can you help me locate barn coats for my customers? I carried them years ago, but can't find a source now. - Roz

Start with the Carhartt Barn Coat (C001) from Midwest Workwear (asi/71127); (888) 923-9675; www.asisupplier.com/71127; available in black and brown, this blanket-lined coat comes in sizes 36-54. Or, warm up to the EnDuro70 Barn Coat (35089) from A Design N Time (asi/30264); (719) 347-0166; www.dntproducts.com. Made of brushed cotton canvas with plaid flannel lining, it features a zip front with hand-warmer pockets.

Last but not least, zip over to Caplee (asi/43798); (800) 772-4716; www.capleecorp.com; for the Cotton Duck Barn Coat (11432). Consisting of 100% garment-washed cotton duck, this coat has two cargo pockets, adjustable cuffs and double-needle stitching throughout.

I've looked on my regular suppliers' websites and can't find baseball caps (preferably Flexfit style) with fleece lining. Can you help? - Naomi

Play ball with the Six-Panel Camouflage Baseball Cap with Velcro Closure (7440EF-MOBU) from Advantage Series Ltd. (asi/32199); (800) 423-8668; www.advon.com. This 100% polyester six-panel cap has a ProStyle profile and fleece ear flaps.

Next, cozy up to the Outdoor Cap with Detachable Ear and Neck Warmer (J3607) from Mega Cap Inc. (asi/70434); (888) 616-6342; www.megacapinc.com; offering UPF 50+ sun protection, it's water repellent with a moisture-

wicking sweatband and fleece lining. Cap off your search with the Heavy Brushed Cotton Cap with Ear Flap and Rope (HE745) from Grace Collection (asi/57904); (413) 650-2548; www.gracecollection.biz. This structured six-panel cap features polar fleece lining and Velcro closure on the back.

Can you help please? Looking for high-end moisture-wicking polos in gold, both unisex and women's sizes, if available. Any help would be greatly appreciated! - Chris

Stay dry with the Nike Solid Dri-Fit Victory Polo (509167) and the women's companion version (640343) from Think Tank Golf LLC (asi/91130); (609) 224-0685; www.thinktankgolf.com. Both feature 100% polyester construction with UV protection and moisture-wicking properties.

Alternately, strike gold with the Sport-Tek Dri-Mesh Polyester Double Poly Mesh Polo (TK469) from SanMar (asi/84863); (800) 346-3369; www.sanmar.com; made of 100% polyester double mesh, it has a taped neck, side vents and a gently contoured silhouette. The Sport-Tek Ladies' Dry Zone Polo Shirt (L475) from the same supplier offers 100% polyester mini piqué, a flat-knit collar, five-button placket and princess seams. Finally, persist with the Men's Tenacity Polo (108) and the Women's Ambition Golf Shirt (104), both from Tri-Mountain (asi/92125); (800) 824-6464; www.trimountain.com. Both performance polos consist of spun polyester micromesh and are designed to control and manage perspiration.

My client needs a white tank top with a built-in bra. I'm not finding anything like this wholesale. Please help! - Annabelle

Check out the Bella + Canvas Ladies' Cotton/Spandex Shelf Bra Tank (960) from alphabroder (asi/34063); (800) 523-4585; www.alphabroder.com. With 95% combed, ringspun cotton/5% spandex, it features a built-in shelf lining for seamless support, a V-neck and satin trim on adjustable straps.

Alternately, race to S&S Activewear (asi/84358); (800) 523-2155; www.ssactivewear.com; for the Boxercraft Racer Tank (S84), a longer-length cotton/spandex top that's lightweight and durable with moisture-wicking technology. Or, try the made-in-USA Cotton Spandex Jersey Bra-Cami (8320) from American Apparel (asi/35297); (213) 488-0226; www.americanapparel.net/wholesaleresources. This form-fitting top is designed with a hidden built-in bralette.

My customer is looking for a Blaze Orange (must be safety for hunting) button-down front long-sleeve shirt. Any ideas where I can find it? - Debbie

Stay seen with the Long-Sleeve Enhanced Visibility Work Shirt (SS14OR) from Rugged Outfitters Inc. (asi/84143); (888) 388-1453; ruggedoutfitters.espsite.com. This shirt offers a button-front closure, two chest pockets and 100% polyester poplin construction. Also, consider the Non-ANSI Long-Sleeve Safety Work-shirt (21207) from Caplee (asi/43798); (800) 772-4716; www.capleecorp.com. Consisting of 100% polyester twill with a lined collar and button chest pockets, it's available in sizes up to 6XLT.

Pro Towels to Expand Production Facility

Pittsburgh-based Pro Towels (asi/79750) is expanding its South Carolina production facility, investing \$1.7 million to complete several upgrades, the company said. The project will lead to the hiring of 50 additional workers over the next five years and bolster the firm's 300,000-square-foot Abbeville County, SC, building. "Abbeville has been an ideal home for us, and the strength of the local community and its high-quality workforce will continue to be the backbone of our success," says Kevin Nord, president of Pro Towels.

The need for expansion is the result of Pro Towels' recent acquisition of Canadian firm Kanata Blanket Co. (asi/63823). To account for the expected increase in production, Pro Towels

is planning to partially relocate Kanata operations to its Abbeville site.

Bryan McClain, Abbeville's council chairman, says Pro Towels "has been a large part of Abbeville County for many years, and it is exciting to see their continued commitment to our community." South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley praised the expansion project, saying it shows Pro Towels' commitment to the state.

Hiring for the new positions is likely to begin in the middle of 2016. The total Abbeville expansion project is expected to be completed by the fourth quarter of 2020. In addition to beach, golf, fitness and rally towels, Pro Towels' product line now includes sweatshirts, bathrobes and blankets.

Political Ad Spending Expected to Grow

With presidential campaigns about to rev into high gear, spending on political advertising is going to accelerate rapidly, a new study predicts. The "2015-2016 Political Advertising Outlook" reveals that politics-driven advertising will reach a record \$11.4 billion in 2016, 20% more than the last comparable presidential election year of 2012.

Factor in 2015 spending, and the tally of ad dollars leaps to a record \$16.5 billion, according to the report compiled by research firm Borrell Associates.

Notably, political campaigners and their supporters will invest more than \$1 billion in digital advertising for the first time. While digital will account for 9.5% of total political ad

spending, politicians are not buying into the medium as rapidly as others. "Political advertising still hasn't caught up with other categories that earmark 30%-50% for digitals," according to the report from Borrell.

For the 2015-16 election period, politicians and their backers are forecast to spend \$8.5 billion on broadcast television spots, the most of any single category. Of that, \$5.5 billion will come from national contests, with the remainder coming from state and local races.

Overall, presidential candidates will spend \$120.8 million on average to fuel their campaigns with advertising. Those vying for Senate seats will spend \$7.3 million each, while those aspiring to the House of

Representatives will invest \$1.6 million on average.

Survey Reveals B2B Buying Influences

Peers, colleagues and independent content are the sources buyers trust most when researching their purchasing decisions. That's according to a new survey from the International Data Corp., which further revealed that marketing tactics were lower down the list when it came to influencing buying actions.

The study found that 95% of respondents identify peers and colleagues as trusted sources of information for buying decisions they're considering. Independent content was the second most trusted source at 86%, followed by vendor websites (81%), public product

Event Calendar

Dec. 6-9, Myrtle Beach, SC
Grand Strand Gift & Resort Merchandise Show
 (678) 285-3976; www.grandstrandgiftshow.com

Jan. 4-6, Orlando, FL
ASI Show
 (800) 546-3300;
www.asishow.com

Jan. 8-11, Oaks, PA
Philadelphia Gift Show
 (678) 285-3976; www.philadelphigiftshow.com

Jan. 22-24, Long Beach, CA
ISS Shows
 (508) 743-0532; www.issshows.com

Jan. 22-25, Seattle
Seattle Gift Show
 (678) 285-3976; www.seattlegiftshow.com

review sites (79%), vendor salespeople (73%) and vendor-sponsored content (67%).

Asked to identify their single most influential source when making buying decisions, about two in five respondents (38%) pointed to their professional network. Put another way, word-of-mouth marketing is the most influential when it comes to purchasing decisions by B2B buyers today. Meanwhile, 22% of respondents said industry experts, while 16% relied most on internal influencers. Only 14% listed relevant vendor-supplied content, with 6% identifying published best practices and 4% going with "none of the above."

Garment Factory Owners Indicted in Bangladesh

A court in Bangladesh has ordered 13 people – including two garment factory owners – to stand trial for the deaths of 112 workers killed in an industrial factory fire in 2012. Delwar Hossain and his wife Mahmuda Akter, owners of Dhaka’s Tazreen Fashions, have pleaded not guilty to culpable homicide charges. The accused were facing an Oct. 1 trial and up to 10 years in jail if convicted. “The court charged the 13 including Delwar and his wife with causing death by negligence,” said Khandakar Abdul Mannan, the prosecutor in the case.

The case is a landmark action in Bangladesh, as it marks the first time that garment factory owners have been pros-

ecuted in the country’s history. A public outcry compelled Bangladeshi officials to charge Hossain and Akter, along with 11 factory managers and security guards, after investigators found the Tazreen factory had no emergency exits. The facility’s gates were also locked and workers were forced to jump from windows on upper floors as the fire spread, police have said. Many of the fire’s victims were women who were overcome by smoke.

Tazreen, which is located in the Ashulia industrial district, supplied clothes to brands like Walmart and Enyce, a label owned by rapper Sean Combs. Since the fire, Western brands have come under increased pressure to ensure safer conditions for Bangladesh’s 4 million

garment workers, who generally earn less than \$50 each month. Many retailers have helped fund safety improvements through a variety of alliances and agreements. The garment trade is Bangladesh’s largest industry, generating roughly \$25 billion annually.

The Tazreen tragedy preceded the Rana Plaza collapse in April 2013, which killed more than 1,130 people and further heightened international scrutiny. Following the Rana incident, Bangladesh’s High Court judges ordered the police to arrest the building’s owner, Sohel Rana, along with the owners of factories inside the building. Rana, who also faces murder charges, remains in jail pending his trial, which is likely to begin this year.

Chilean Artist Transforms Photos With Embroidery

Jose Romussi, a Chilean artist who now hails from Berlin, embroiders patterns and words over photos and magazine pages, transforming them into artwork that is both unsettling and captivating. The self-taught Romussi first picked up a needle and thread when he was experimenting with collages a few years ago. “I began by embellishing my collages with thread and then moved onto photographs,” he tells *AnOther Magazine*. “I found it took the images into a sort of parallel zone that was somehow timeless – it’s the technique that best allows me to get my ideas across.”

Speaking of his mixed-media

artwork, he says: “The main thing that matters to me with my art is that it makes people feel or think something; that is more than enough for me.”

Museum Exhibit Showcases Historic Vestments

An exhibit in England’s Auckland Castle charts the story of one 17th-century woman’s dangerous embroidery. Helena Wintour, whose father and two uncles were hanged, drawn and quartered for their part in a plot to kill the Protestant King James I and his Parliament in 1605, created a number of elaborately embellished Catholic church vestments

throughout her life, 13 of which will be on display at the castle until April. The silk and velvet vestments are decorated with Jesuit symbolism and iconography and are prominently signed with Wintour’s name or initials.

“They are truly astonishing and glitter with gold, silver, precious stones and pearls,” Assistant Curator

Clare Baron tells the *Darlington & Stockton Times*.

“She would have known that had she been caught making these overtly Catholic vestments, she would have received a severe punishment. She was an extraordinarily brave and independent woman. ... The vestments were her way of communicating her devotion, but also her defiance.”

The “Plots and Span-gles” exhibit will also include artifacts from the failed Gunpowder Plot, including the lantern Guy Fawkes was carrying when he was caught with 36 barrels of gunpowder under the Houses of Parliament.



SALES

Ukraine Native Launches Embroidered Fashion Line

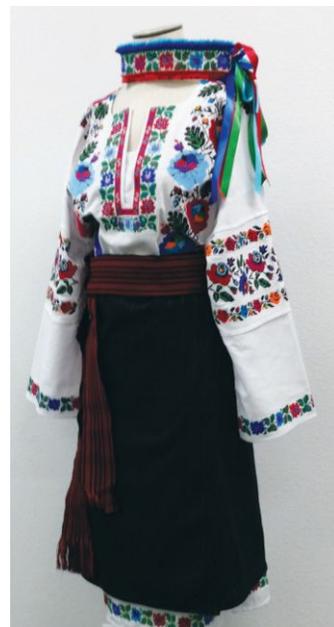
Born in a small Ukrainian village near the Carpathian Mountains, Halyna Hostetler was immersed in traditional hand embroidery techniques from an early age, learning the craft from her mother and grandmothers. Though she eventually pursued a medical degree, her love of embroidery never wavered. Now settled in California, Hostetler has started a fashion line, Zelenco Designs, translating the old-school embroidery techniques she mastered as a child with Wilcom digitizing software.

“I specialize in cross-stitch design,” she says. “They’re machine embroidery, but they look handmade.”

She has also been taking traditional embroidery techniques from other cultures and converting them into machine stitches. Hostetler says she recently discovered a unique type of cross-stitch that resembles lace, which she hopes to debut in her fashion soon. In addition, Hostetler is creating original embellished pieces with a more contemporary look. Her latest collection, “Harmony,” merges Slavic embroidery with

modern European design.

Hostetler’s work was featured in San Francisco Fashion Week this fall, and is gaining attention at other fashion-buyer events. The apparel line is still new, but expanding rapidly, as Hostetler partners with Los Angeles manufacturers eager to produce her designs. She’s already seen strangers sporting her designs at Ukrainian festivals and other venues. “It’s so nice to see people around wearing my stuff,” Hostetler says. “The business is kind of blooming very fast. ... It’s exciting.”



Designer Halyna Hostetler creates both traditional embroidered fashion and embellished pieces with a more contemporary look.

WEB

Fundraiser Brings Over \$100,000 for Slain Cop’s Family

After an Edmonton, Alberta police constable was shot to death this summer, Print Machine owner Jonny Jacques knew he had to do something to help. His shop quickly mocked up a T-shirt design combining a blue ribbon with the phrase #EPSStrong, which had already gone viral on social media. Using tools from developer InkSoft, Jacques created a 30-day online fundraiser to benefit the family of Daniel Woodall. “I thought \$50,000 in 30 days was kind of a lofty goal,” the Canadian business-

man says. “But we had surpassed that within three days.”

The key, he says, was a strong presence on social media and a cause that resonated with the local community. “We have a few partners that have a massive following, and they started tweeting and talking about it,” Jacques adds. “From there, it really just gained legs.” Ultimately, Print Machine was able to sell more than 5,000 T-shirts, raising \$100,780 for the Woodall family.

Woodall, an eight-year veteran of the Edmonton Police

Service, worked in the hate crimes unit and was killed June 8 while executing an arrest warrant, leaving behind a wife, Claire, and two young children. Though Jacques does not know the family personally, he also has two children, making the tragedy strike home.

The #EPSStrong shirt was the first time Print Machine had tried out InkSoft’s fundraising module, but Jacques says he was pleased with how quick and easy it was to use. “We made the design and had the store up within half an hour,” he adds.



Print Machine sold more than 5,000 of these T-shirts to raise money for the family of a slain police officer in Edmonton, Alberta.

SHOP MAKEOVER

Embroidery Coach Helps Michigan Firm Improve Production

Michigan-based Sandlot Sports is one of the many custom-apparel shops to benefit from Embroidery Coach Joyce Jagger's decades of experience. Owned and operated by Adam McCauley and Ryan Dost, the business consists of four retail stores and a production facility for screen printing, heat pressing, embroidery and twill.

Jagger spent four days this summer working with Sandlot's three embroidery department employees, helping them improve the quality of their product and increase their efficiency. She helped them figure out proper hooping methods, how to determine the proper backing type and size for any garment, how to keep the embroidery machines in good working order and how to steam garments to cleanly remove topping, among other things. "The real issue is that they really had not had the proper training from the very beginning, and they really did not know the shortcuts or time-saving procedures that are necessary for efficient production," Jagger says.



The team at Sandlot Sports learned some invaluable tricks of the trade from Embroidery Coach Joyce Jagger (right).

McCauley says he was impressed with Jagger's refreshing "no-excuses, no-nonsense attitude." Though some employees got defensive at some of the changes Jagger suggested, they were converted as she "peppered our staff with aha moment after aha moment," McCauley says. "[It] was the most focused training that our company has ever seen, and I would be embarrassed if we couldn't earn a return on our investment in the next six months," he adds.

Jagger, for her part, says the trip to Michigan was "very successful." She adds that she's looking forward to following up with Sandlot Sports to ensure their continued improvement.

MARKETING

Branding Paramount at Oregon Shop

When Faith and Rob Stewart decided to rebrand their 22-year-old screen-printing and embroidery business, they looked no further than Faith's closet, zeroing-in on her signature red winter boots. Red Boot Branding in Sandy, OR, came from a "personal statement," Faith says. "We didn't want to be like everyone else." Prior to 2013, the shop was known as Logoworks, but as the Internet gained prominence, the Stewarts discovered there were too many other businesses out there with the same name; rather than fight with their rivals, they used the discovery as an opportunity to evolve.

The shop's eye-catching logo and a recent move to a larger location with ample display windows has helped boost business, according to Faith. When you're in



Red Boot Branding in Sandy, OR, tries to set an example for its clients, by focusing on noteworthy self-branding and attractive displays.

the business of branding other businesses, "You want to be the example," she adds.

In addition to screen printing and embroidery, Red Boot Branding offers direct-to-garment printing, vinyl and promotional products. Faith Stewart says she uses the display windows of her 5,000-square-foot free-standing building to "tell a little story" about the shop's capabilities. For example, she'll position an attractive array of screen-printed shirts above the "screen-printing" sign. "We've noticed that even if you put a lot of signage out, not everybody takes the time to read or process what the words say," she says. The apparel displays are a quick and graphic way to get the message across, she adds.

THERESA HEGEL is a senior staff writer for *Stitches*. Follow her on Twitter @theresahegel. Contact: thegel@ascentral.com.

DECORATING SOLUTIONS

DECORATING SOLUTIONS
Five Steps
By Tonia Kimbrough

Create a PennFlex Patch

Learn how to offer uniform clients long-lasting, full-color custom patches.

STEP 1. Submit your artwork or idea.

Whether you already have artwork or need it from scratch, Penn Emblem Co. (asi/77120) can create a design that meets your client's criteria. PennFlex patches allow for small detail and vivid colors. Tip: The text within a design shouldn't be less than 1mm (0.04") in height. Smaller text may need to be altered slightly larger.

STEP 4. Get ready for production.

A custom mold is created specifically for your PennFlex patches that are produced by an automated color machine that fills in the color of your choice. Penn Emblem's operators supervise the patches to heat and cool at the correct temperature, ensuring they maintain color, clarity and shape.

PENN EMBLEM CO.
(ASI/77120); CIRCLE 80
ON FREE INFO CARD.

STEP 2. Choose the material.

Choose budget-friendly PVC (polyvinyl chloride) for large quantities. Compared to direct embroidery, PennFlex patches are designed not to peel, fray or crack.

STEP 3. Decide on a backing.

Depending on whether your client wants to use these patches permanently or to re-use them, PennFlex patches may use Velcro, a pressure-sensitive stick-on or no backing for a sew-on application.

TIP: Rita Leybelman, marketing communications manager of Penn Emblem Co. (asi/77120), provided the five steps and shares this advice: "With PennFlex and the multiple ways for application, any spot can be ideal depending on the type of emblem. For example, the chest would be ideal to display your company's logo to stand out from the competition."

TIP: Consider the weight of your fabric before choosing a PennFlex patch. "For example, you wouldn't want to place it on a very thin fabric," Leybelman says. "Since the PVC is heavier than a traditional patch, it might weigh it down."

STEP 5. Attach.

Velcro, sew or stick your PennFlex patches on your clients' jackets, jerseys, pants and any other accessories you add on for a coordinated outfit. They work on most soft goods.



A New Look for Custom Embroidery

Windswept Marketing (asi/97248) presents Indirect Embroidery – a custom option that offers polished embroidery looks, without the raw itch of a traditional stitch. Brian Fuchs, president of Windswept Marketing, describes the rollout of patented Indirect Embroidery as a cost-efficient way for businesses to dictate how and where they'd like their branding to happen, and additionally have access to the latest embroidery trends, while preventing skin irritation and sloppy fabric puckering by using embroidery that adheres to fabric with an adhesive.

For companies hoping to utilize embroidery in a creative fashion, Windswept Marketing also offers dye sublimation. This process features a rainbow range of colors sublimated into the thread print, regardless of text size. Fuchs elaborates that both options offer temporary branding solutions, great for awareness campaigns, trade shows, in stadium giveaways and more at a very low cost. Companies hoping to avoid costly logo mistakes, including outdated logos, name changes or wrong colors, will also be pleased to note Indirect Embroidery's cover-up process allows you to put new transfers on top, without wasting product.

In addition to ordering custom Indirect Embroidery, decorators also can have access to the technology to create this imprinting technique in their shops. "Over the years, we've worked both with big players like the NFL and small businesses alike, and the question was always, 'Can our business apply the embroidery ourselves in-house?'" Fuchs says. "Finally, we can supply those businesses with the tools needed to do that." The tools include the required machinery and the ability to get licensed, in order to ensure proper application of Indirect Embroidery.

dery. He explains the biggest problem with DIY adhesive application has been ensuring the product's clean application appearance matches the uniformed quality Windswept Marketing provides in its custom patches.

"Indirect Embroidery is a great permanent branding solution that offers a lot of flexibility for your embroidered, screen-printed, bedazzled rhinestone needs and more," Fuchs says. "It truly is a unique process." – Leah Tucker

Are You Vape-Ready?



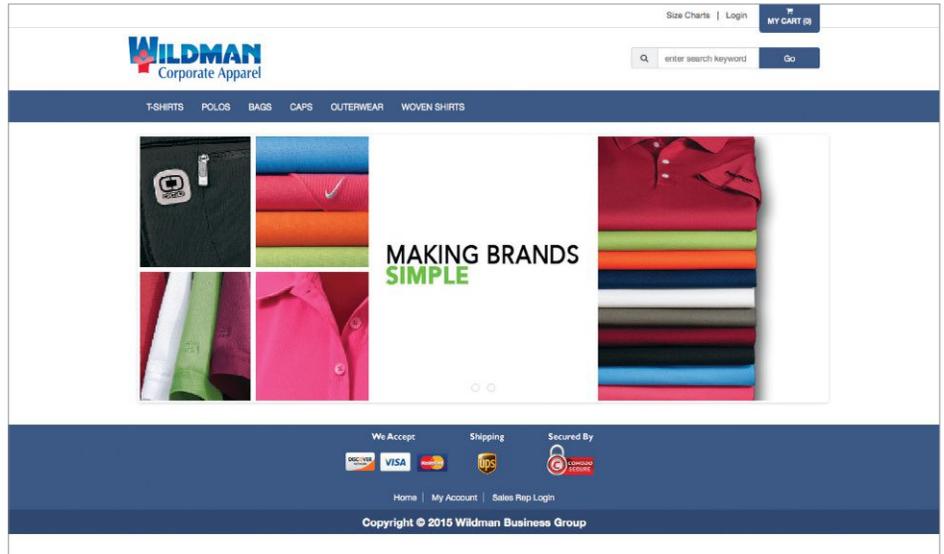
This has been the year of the vape – that's how CNBC's Kate Rogers reported the trend early in 2015. Little wonder given that the industry was forecasted, she wrote, to reach \$3.5 billion this year. It's worth noting as well that Mighty Skins (a brand of protective vinyl skins for e-gadgets, blog.mightyskins.com) highlights the demand for customized vape products. Its sampling of 100 "purveyors of all things vape" finds that the trend is growing and 42% "operate multiple store locations."

Get on board with the trend and check out The Wild Side's new series of designs inspired by the vaping phenomenon. These full-front plastisol transfers feature contemporary and retro images incorporating vape language and vibe.

WebJaguar E-Commerce Solution for Online Sales

Have you considered an online presence, or want to improve the one you have? WebJaguar might be the e-commerce solution for you. Developer AdvancedEMedia offers an out-of-the-box option that allows for easy customization when necessary. The WebJaguar e-commerce platform allows small to mid-sized promotional products companies to automate and manage business functions with a website, e-catalog/content management, shopping cart, CRM and lead generation technologies.

The program works for Wildman Corporate Apparel, which sought a streamlined and simple e-commerce platform in 2013. Not only does the successful distributor have its own website, it also creates and maintains sites for its clients. “We build custom Web stores for many of our customers to facilitate the ordering process,” says Casey Pepper, vice president of Wildman. “We’re an extension of their brand, and if we can help enhance that for them in any way, then it’s a win-win.”



ADVANCEDEMEDIA; CIRCLE 83 ON FREE INFO CARD.

Insta Graphic Model 201 Delivers Heat In A Small Footprint

The new Model 201 heat press from Insta Graphic Systems is a small-format machine with a 13" x 13" platens and a compact frame. The user-friendly heat press provides unobstructed access to the lower platen so that loaded garments and placing transfers is hassle-free. Two notable features include over-the-center pressure for even and heavy-duty heat distribution and a cast-in tubular heating element that's coiled throughout the upper platen for reliable and even heat circulation.



INSTA GRAPHIC SYSTEMS; CIRCLE 84 ON FREE INFO CARD.

BERNINA Sews for a Cause

BERNINA of America, a manufacturer of sewing, embroidery and quilting machines, recently answered Animal Care Centers of NYC's plea for help with a burgeoning feline population by donating more than 100 kennel quilts. The kennel quilts were created during BERNINA's annual Dealer training conference in July. The project is part of BERNINA's new partnership with the Petfinder Foundation and The Quilt Pattern Magazine to provide kennel quilts to animal shelters around the country through the volunteer efforts of more than 400 BERNINA dealers.



BERNINA OF AMERICA; CIRCLE 85 ON FREE INFO CARD.

Reduce Operator Turnover Cost

Finding, hiring and training a new production employee for a screen-printing shop can be costly. Johnny Shell, vice president of technical services at SGIA, suggests you consider whether to hire employees who are full- or part-time. “Each comes with certain benefits and drawbacks involving costs and worker commitment,” Shell says. “Hiring part-time workers may be an attractive choice for business owners who need to keep costs to a minimum, or that may have seasonal work. Part-time workers may show more enthusiasm for their jobs and can be more eager to learn. They also give employers the chance to ‘try before you buy’ the new hire before making them a full-time employee.”



SGIA; CIRCLE 86 ON FREE INFO CARD.

Quick Tips



DALCO ATHLETIC; CIRCLE 89 ON FREE INFO CARD.

TIP: Go Bold and Old. Dalco Athletic's Thermo Image digital transfer series enables you to create distressed-looking patterns in 13 fashion colors; this product is ideal for creating lettering or numbers for any type of sportswear or novelty apparel.



IMPRINTABLES WAREHOUSE (ASI/58475); CIRCLE 90 ON FREE INFO CARD.

TIP: Learn a New Technique. A video by Imprintables Warehouse (asi/58475) showcases a new technique using SPECTRA Perform Clear printable heat-transfer vinyl in a cut-only application to create cool special effects for lettering. In this brief tutorial, you'll see how to use SPECTRA Perform Clear Gloss to achieve a tone-on-tone effect and Perform Clear Matte for a frosted look, using only your vinyl cutter. Check out the “Perform Clear Gloss & Matte Cut Only Application” on Youtube.com.

TIP: Customize Your Lettering with Any Word. Any Way Standard text templates from Stahls' (asi/91804). This product is great for decorating school or team uniforms and spiritwear, including shirts, jackets and sweatshirts.

Materials include solid-color Poly-TWILL and heat-transfer media such as Thermo-FILM and Thermo-GRIP, as well as Boxercraft plaids, prints and metallic appliqué fabrics. Block and script styles are offered with connected, unconnected, detailed and cloud backgrounds in a choice of color treatments, fonts and split fonts.



STAHL'S (ASI/91804); CIRCLE 88 ON FREE INFO CARD.

PRODUCT PICK 1

Learn how to put a fresh spin on a collegiate staple in a new Stahls' (asi/91804) video on customizing classic varsity jackets with special-effect heat printing. Find out how new jacket styles make it easy to create updated looks and expand sales opportunities using specialty transfer materials like metallic and glitters along with your heat press.

You'll watch a step-by-step demonstration of how to print the front, back and sleeves of a jacket, efficiently, with quality results. You'll learn about positioning, dealing with “problem areas” like pockets, zippers, seams and more, as you watch a traditional letterman jacket take on new appeal with CAD-CUT Glitter Flake transfer material. Visit www.stahls.com.



STAHL'S (ASI/91804); CIRCLE 88 ON FREE INFO CARD.

PRODUCT PICK 2

Achieve the look and feel of direct-to-garment printing while retaining light, vibrant colors with Neenah JetPro SofStretch inkjet heat transfer paper, now available from Coastal Business Supplies in 13" x 19", as well as 11" x 17" sheets.



COASTAL BUSINESS; CIRCLE 87 ON FREE INFO CARD.

Specifically developed for creating soft, breathable transfers for light-colored garments, JetPro SofStretch transfers can be applied to cotton, polyester and cotton/polyester-blends. This light, bright paper yields vivid colors, and its thin polymer coating holds ink for maximum color saturation while making the polymer background surrounding the image less apparent. The transfer's softness increases with washing, and stretching after peeling increases its durability. In addition, Neenah is Green-e Certified, which makes JetPro SofStretch transfers great for infant and children's clothing.

TONIA KIMBROUGH is a contributing writer to *Stitches*.

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LOOK BOOK

Trend Alerts

By Christine Stoddard

APPAREL

Quilted Jackets

For a classic piece revived as one of this season's top trends, try the quilted jacket. Warm, comfortable and stylish, quilted jackets are firmly 'in.' Extra points for updates on their '90s predecessors, whether that means less puffiness and more slimming, innovative insulation materials, or fun details.

"Quilted jackets are making a comeback along with other favorites from the '90s," says Shoo Passey, director of design at Trimark (asi/92121). "When you look around, you're seeing high-rise pants, Converse sneakers and jean jackets. The quilted jacket trend is no different."

Passey notes that, these days, quilted jackets are more body-conscious. That means a more flattering silhouette, as well as enhanced functionality, with jackets and coats better equipped for extreme temperatures. "They keep you protected from the elements while also adding style," Passey says.

Quilted jackets provide a canvas for embroidery as part of promo campaigns in outdoorsy markets. Smaller, more discreet designs may appear on the left/right breast, while larger, elaborate designs could go on the back.



Men's Lithium Quilted Jacket (9540) from Charles River Apparel (asi/44620; circle 91 on Free Info Card) features a 100% dobby polyester shell made from recycled PET bottles. Not only is it green-friendly, it's water-resistant and breathable, and comes in black-gray or burnt orange, sizes S through 3XL.



Lightweight but warm, the Gravenhurst Roots73 Jacket (TM99409) from Trimark (asi/92121; circle 92 on Free Info Card) runs in sizes S through 2XL and comes in Loden (as pictured) or Smoke Gray. Best suited for late fall, a mild winter and early spring, it stealthily conceals a zipper with a snap center placket.



The Arusha Insulated Jacket (TM99601) from Trimark (asi/92121; circle 92 on Free Info Card) is made for adventure with Thermaltech protection, water-resistant coating and water-repellent finish. It runs in sizes XS to 3XL and comes in Aspen Blue, Navy, Gray Storm and Black.

APPAREL

Light-weight Hoodies

The original hoodie was a mean hunk of cotton that was designed to protect athletes and laborers working outside in the coldest conditions. While that style still persists, today the hoodie has multiplied and divided to fit just about every style and climate. Thus, the lightweight hoodie. It looks like a sweatshirt and feels like a T-shirt. It can be worn anytime (even on the hottest of days) and by anyone – skaters and sightseers, C++ programmers and CEOs. Layered under a jacket or over a tee, it offers a relaxed vibe that suggests the wearer “gets it,” no matter his or her station in life. – *C.J. Mittica*

Lightweight jersey hoodie (DT1100) from SanMar (asi/84863; circle 93 on Free Info Card). Screen printed by Motion Textile (asi/72662; circle 94 on Free Info Card).



Unisex French terry hoodie (97200) from Delta Apparel (asi/49172; circle 95 on Free Info Card). Screen printed by Visual Impressions (circle 96 on Free Info Card).



Women's hooded long-sleeve tee (887L) from Anvil Knitwear Inc. (asi/36350; circle 97 on Free Info Card). Direct-to-garment printed by Heritage Screen Printing (asi/700490; circle 98 on Free Info Card).



Burnside yarn-dyed raglan pullover (B8127) from S&S Activewear (asi/84358; circle 99 on Free Info Card). Screen printed by Visual Impressions (circle 96 on Free Info Card).

LOOK BOOK

Trend Alerts

COLOR

Stormy Gray

If stormy gray brings to mind a brooding Mr. Darcy or an oil painting of a shipwreck in the making, you might be pigeonholing the color as a drama queen. Instead, think of this headlining winter color as a staple shade that works with anything, anywhere, anytime. According to Jennifer Grimes, sales executive of Adline Industries (asi/31977), “Gray is a cool, neutral color that adds a sense of balance. It’s often perceived as sophisticated and a formal color.” So if you want a polished, put-together look, opt for deep gray. Serving as a gentler alternative to pure black, dark shades of gray flatters all skin tones and work for adults and children alike.

“Stormy gray also offers a variety of possibilities and color combinations to accent any project,” Grimes says.

“It also works well in winter for similar reasons, as a neutral, it is a good color selection when layering,” says John Perez, a marketing associate at Tri-Mountain (asi/92125). “How about combining cranberry and stormy gray? Carolina blue and stormy gray? Pistachio and stormy gray? Even more prudent clients will likely say yes to all.”

The Gallant Men's Polo (K209) from Tri-Mountain (asi/92125; circle 100 on Free Info Card) is 100% polyester heather and features UltraCool moisture-wicking technology. Available in sizes S through 4XL, this easy-care shirt is topped off with a fabric collar and three-button placket.



Stay toasty with this Longer Length Knit Scarf (F1001) by SanMar Canada (asi/84864; circle 107 on Free Info Card). Measuring 9"x72" and 100% acrylic, it's perfect for wrapping around and around your neck for snuggly warmth.



The Tyndall Polyfleece Vest (18501) from Trimark (asi/92121; circle 92 on Free Info Card) runs in sizes S through 5XL and is made from 100% polyester anti-pill microfleece.

EMBELLISHMENT

Punky Studs and Sparkles

A little shimmer or metal on a dark or neutral background can bring just the quirk, glamour or even punk flair that your clients need for fun or edgier promotional campaigns. Maybe that embellishment will come in the form of studs, or maybe it will come in the form of sparkles. Either way, literal shine will bring figurative shine to your clients' advertising specialties.

"Rhinestones are an ideal embellishment year round because women always love and want something sparkly, whether it's jewelry, clothing or accessories. That simply will never change," says Lee Romano Sequeira, co-owner of Sparkle Plenty Designs (asi/88442).

Studs and sparkles can be used to spell out a brand name or slogan or form the logo on many different kinds of apparel. If your clients want a little less flash, remind them that studs and sparkles also can be used to augment embroidery and other forms of decoration, rather than being the center of attention.

"Sparkle really brightens up those dreary days of winter," Sequeira says.



Festive for winter, this holiday tree scene, long-sleeved tee (product # HOLI-TREE) from Sparkle Plenty Designs (asi/88442; circle 101 on Free Info Card) is filled with shimmering rhinestones. Design can be customized with name or logo.



Washed Army Cap Cut and Sewn Mesh Top and Bill (9054A) from Mega Cap Inc. (asi/70434; circle 102 on Free Info Card) blends camo and metal star studs for clients who want their promotional campaigns to carry a heavy punch. An adjustable fabric strap in the back makes the cap one-size-fits-all.



These Lady's Plantar Fasciitis Studded Mules (86191) from Hammacher Schlemmer (asi/59444; circle 103 on Free Info Card) not only make a statement but are therapeutic. Offering a spacious toe box, the shoes feature slip-resistant rubber soles.

Look Book

Showcase: Totes and Bags

Bags and totes are a year-round necessity, both as fashion statements and practical belongings. They also offer clients a swath of space for embroidered logos or slogans or even the possibility for an all-over print suited to their promotional campaigns. While everyone needs bags from January through December, there are special considerations to keep in mind when winter rolls around.

“As usual for winter, black and darker earth tones are the key in bags,” says Dean Resnekov, director of Indigo (asi/62560). “Many people switch from a smaller clutch to a larger tote to carry more of the gear necessary in winter, whether going to work or the gym.”

More subdued colors tend to match the darker clothing many people select for their winter wardrobes, from black puffy coats to gray cardigans. Of course, some clients might prefer to go for something that pops, especially if they’re running a year-round campaign. As for bigger bags? We all need the extra space to carry scarves, hats, gloves and extra layers not in use when we come inside.

Made from coated cotton fabric with leather trim, the Gretta Signature Satchel from Indigo (asi/62560; circle 104 on Free Info Card) in brown or navy is well-equipped with interior pockets and a key hook. It is 12”x7”x10” with a 5” handle drop and 13.5” strap.



The Suede Star Stud Flag Handbag (B129) from Scully Leather (asi/86020; circle 106 on Free Info Card) offers a patriotic flair suitable for winter and beyond. With double leather straps, the bag is roomy and includes a combination of zip and open interior pockets.



The Duet Large Carryall Tote (A236) from Vitronic (asi/93990; circle 105 on Free Info Card) features two colors, one exterior and one interior. Options include black/red, navy/gray, taupe/turquoise and crimson/gray (as pictured). And at 16.5”x14”x5”, it really is big.



The Suede Tote (C129) from Vitronic (asi/93990; circle 105 on Free Info Card) is real antique milled cow suede with a wide, flat plain for a promo image or slogan. Genuine leather handles and antique gold hardware complete the rustic but sophisticated look of this 13.5”x13”x5” purse.

Niche: Resort and Hospitality

From ski trips to tropical getaways to golf course retreats, wintertime offers just as many opportunities to sport resort wear as summertime does. This is the category of clothing that is comfortable and relaxed, allowing for moderate physical activity while still being stylish and body-conscious. That includes its trendy cousin athleisure, a dressy form of activewear, such as perfectly fitting yoga pants and chic sneakers.

“There are several things to consider when choosing travelling clothes,” says Shurli Allinott, president of Brandwear (asi/41545). “Pick items that are easy care – meaning that the wrinkles fall out when unpacked. Secondly, you want to be comfortable, but not at the expense of sacrificing looking great. Layering pieces are vital no matter where you travel – the weather isn’t always predictable. The days can be warm and the nights cool. Lastly, it’s convenient if you can work out in the same clothes that you dress up and go to dinner in.”

Clients may opt for a wide range of decorations for resort and hospitality wear, depending on the item and the promotional campaign. The key is to keep decorations appropriate for participating in physical activities, meaning they should be breathable and never interfere with leisurely pursuits.



Made from a comfortable, high-quality nylon/spandex blend called Omega Fit, the Layla Jacket (22) from Brandwear (asi/41545; circle 79 on Free Info Card) features flat-lock stitching for a smooth look that doesn't itch. Its discreet thumb holes are as functional as they are stylish.



The Vesta Short Sleeve Polo (TM96221) from Trimark (asi/92121; circle 92 on Free Info Card) is made from breathable micro polyester textured knit with wicking finish, and available in Solace Blue, New Royal or White. This logo-friendly option also is snag-resistant and offers UV protection.



To keep the sun out of your face on the course, there's the Fancy Clip On Visor with Moisture Absorbing Sweatband (4108A) from Mega Cap Inc. (asi/70434; circle 102 on Free Info Card). Its comfortable fit and quick-drying feature means you'll want to keep it on, not toss it off – which is important for clients' promotions. Metallic studs are a cute bonus.

LOOK BOOK

Inspiration: Stacy Rausch



Stacy Rausch is a graphic designer for a Washington, D.C. metro area newspaper by day

and a fiber whisperer by night. Though Rausch trained as a photographer, she turned to painting, drawing and crafting in her spare time. But, ever since taking a class at Artistic Artifacts, an independently owned craft supply store, she has experimented with art quilts. "I'm an artist who dabbles in different media, so adding fiber to the mix wasn't a stretch," she says.

These decorative pieces incorporate mixed media and are a sight to behold. Rausch's quilts feature embroidery and even paper. An art quilt Rausch made to depict Washington, D.C.'s cherry blossom trees, included paper from an old encyclopedia.

Rausch first exhibited her quilts at Del Ray Artisans, a community art space in Alexandria, VA, at a 2013 show exclusively for its board. She visually represented six elements of composition, from rhythm to scale, using black and white materials only.

Now, Rausch is president of the Northern Virginia Modern Quilt Guild and has a piece in "National Parks: Celebrating 100 Years," an exhibit at the International Quilt Festival in Houston. Combining fabric, paint, ink, embroidery and beading, her quilt captures red cliffs and cacti in Utah's Capitol Reef National Park.



▲ Rausch's six-part art quilt series, which was displayed at Del Ray Artisans in Alexandria, VA, demonstrates the elements of composition, specifically movement and proportion.



▲ Rausch's mixed-media art quilts not only feature fabric, but typically paper and found objects, too. ▶



▲ Artist Stacy Rausch stands before her contribution to Del Ray Artisans' 2013 board member show.

CHRISTINE STODDARD is a contributing writer to *Stitches*.

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ASI Show Orlando Schedule at a Glance

Monday, Jan. 4	Education Conference	8:20 a.m.-4:20 p.m.
	ASI's Minute to Win It	4:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 5	Sell to Win – Hot Markets! New Products!	8:30 a.m.-9:45 a.m.
	Exhibits Open – 10 a.m.-5 p.m.	
Wednesday, Jan. 6	Gala Celebration at SeaWorld Orlando	7 p.m.-10 p.m.
	Marcus Lemonis Keynote	8:30 a.m.-9:45 a.m.
	Exhibits Open – 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.	
	Closing Celebration	3:30 p.m.-4 p.m.

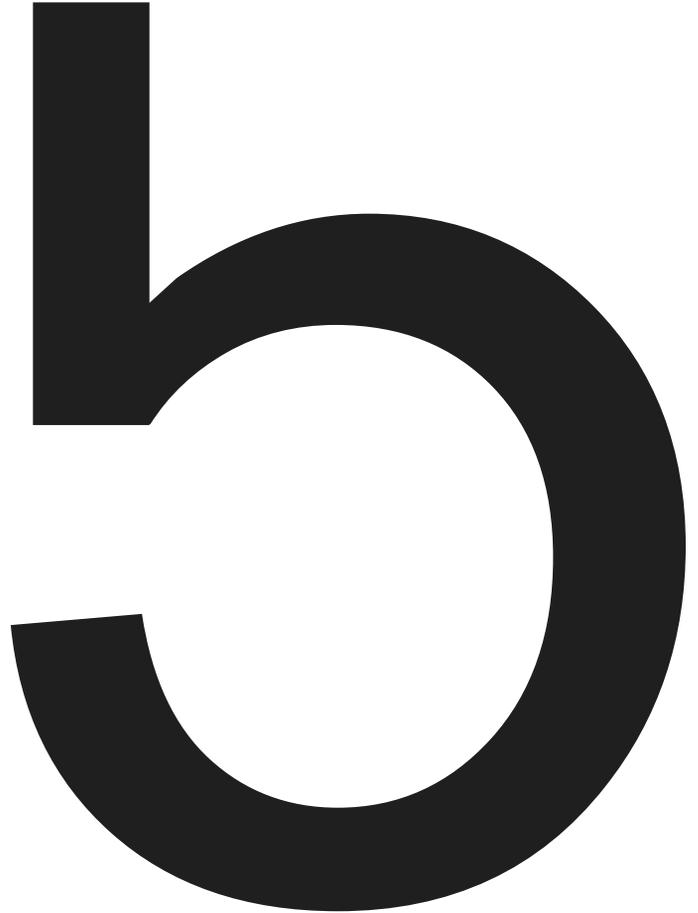
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2015



P O W E R



Stitches reveals its sixth-annual list of the most powerful people and companies in the industry today. Ranked from one to 75, everyone on this list is influencing the direction the decorating industry will take in 2016 and beyond.

BY JOE HALEY, THERESA HEGEL, SARA LAVENDUSKI, NICOLE ROLLENDER, ALEXANDRA STEEL AND CHUCK ZAK

It's that time again.

Time to celebrate the year's most dedicated educators, innovative manufacturers and creative apparel suppliers. The movers and shakers, risk-takers and decision-makers in the decorated-apparel world are all represented on the 2015 *Stitches* Power 75.

We've rounded up the brightest and most accomplished stars in the industry, ranking them based on their relative influence and continued relevance. The Power 75 cuts a wide swath – recognizing equipment makers, software developers, accessory and apparel suppliers, educators and trade show organizers, plus a handful of fashion icons. These 75 companies and individuals have made a big impact and will play a major role in shaping the future of the decorated-apparel industry.

For the sixth year in a row, *Stitches* has picked out the shining stars of the business, asking them to share the secrets of their success, what sets their brand apart and their thoughts on the future. Read on to discover who made the cut for 2015. Plus, we surveyed our Power List members to gauge their outlook on 2016, find out their biggest challenges and determine where the best business opportunities lie. Check out their responses on page 56.



PAUL GALLAGHER



KRIS JANOWSKI

#1

The Solution Sleuths

PAUL GALLAGHER
KRIS JANOWSKI

Hirsch International (asi/14982)

If there were a merit badge for innovation, Paul Gallagher, Kris Janowski and the rest of the Hirsch International (asi/14982) team would receive it. After all, the industry-leading supplier of apparel-decoration equipment recently assisted none other than the Boy Scouts of America in its quest to build a better badge. Staff at Hirsch's Solution Studio in Huntersville, NC, came up with a laser-cutting technique to help the Scouts save time and effort in the emblem production process. Previously, the organization had been using a more labor-intensive hot knife to cut out patches. "You can imagine how many patches the Boy Scouts do," says Hirsch CEO Gallagher. "They wanted a solution."

These days, many of Hirsch's customers are looking for solutions, and Gallagher and Janowski are more than happy to provide them. Their company stocked the Solution Studio with state-of-the-art equipment and recently expanded its staff, investing in about a dozen experts, each with a deep knowledge of textiles and decorating techniques. "It's more than just a showroom or a place to show off samples," Gallagher says. "What it's really turned into is a laboratory. ... We named it years ago, and it has more solutions than we expected."

Hirsch helped a Chinese company develop a method of making patches without a merrow border to allow them to create cutouts, like peace signs and breast cancer ribbons. Experts at the Solution Studio cooked up a recipe for a dye-blocking agent that lets decorators produce crisp direct-to-garment prints on polyester fabrics. The studio experiments with new fabrics and surfaces, developing techniques that Hirsch customers can use in the field. "There's a big picture that goes on that sometimes our clients don't see because they're bogged down and filling orders for tomorrow," Gallagher says. "We have the luxury of experimenting and playing a little bit."

In the last year and a half, around 100 companies have made the trek to Huntersville, sometimes to test out equipment and get pointers on how best to grow their business, sometimes to get advice on special decorating applications. "That's what is exciting for us," Janowski says.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40



The Solution Sleuths
PAUL GALLAGHER
KRIS JANOWSKI

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39

This year, each of the five major lines Hirsch represents released new products, signaling a new era of growth for decorators, according to Gallagher. Among the new items is the Paradigm II from Kornit, which gives printers the capability to combine direct-to-garment and screen printing in one piece of equipment. The TMAR-K series from Tajima has an electronically controlled presser foot, which allows decorators to minimize stress

“There’s a big picture that goes on that sometimes our clients don’t see because they’re bogged down and filling orders for tomorrow. WE HAVE THE LUXURY OF EXPERIMENTING and playing a little bit.”

PAUL GALLAGHER,
HIRSCH INTERNATIONAL (ASI/14982)

on delicates. Not only does Hirsch run extensive testing on each new product before making it available for customers, Gallagher and Janowski also fly out at least three times a year to meet with each manufacturer whose line they represent and get involved in the development process. “We’ll talk about our marketplace and what we need,” Gallagher says. “We’ll give them a vision, and they’ll come out with a

much better end result than we ever imagined.”

Another big accomplishment in the last year was a complete revamp of Hirsch’s website. The updated site includes product and application video clips and is organized to make it easy for customers to find and research products.

The redesigned website and deep investment into the Solution Studio represent Hirsch’s renewed commitment to enhanced customer service and industry education. Gallagher and Janowski want their company to be more than just another equipment seller; instead, they’ve positioned Hirsch as an expert resource – solving decorators’ dilemmas and pioneering new products and techniques. “What we’ve learned over the years is that if we’re focused on customers’ success, and not specifically just selling to them, they’re going to end up with more of the products we offer anyway,” Gallagher says. — *Theresa Hegel*

#1

PAUL GALLAGHER
CEO

KRIS JANOWSKI
President

Hirsch International (asi/14982)
2014 RANK: 5

Gallagher and Janowski are dedicated to taking decoration to the extreme. The leaders of equipment distributor Hirsch International recently expanded staff at the company’s Huntersville, NC, Solution Studio. Last year, more than 100 key customers visited the site where experts test the limits of decoration – innovating new techniques and enhancing existing methods. Gallagher and Janowski’s boundary-pushing philosophy spills into their free time as well. Gallagher has scaled and bungee-jumped off bridges and driven on a NASCAR track – with Janowski serving as videographer/photographer. “This is teamwork at its finest,” Janowski says of their partnership. And the industry has noticed, as fellow Power 75 members and the industry at large rated the duo with high influence within the past year.

#2

TED STAHL
Executive Chairman
and Founder
GroupeSTAHL

2014 RANK: 2

Stahl wants to make sure his company’s 75,000-plus customers are experts on the ins and outs of heat printing. To that end, GroupeSTAHL this year launched *STAHLSTV.com*, an online educational destination for custom garment decorators. The site features interactive programming and houses a huge repository of how-to heat printing, equipment and training videos. The company continues to expand outside of the virtual world as well, adding a 25,000-square-foot distribution and warehouse center in Dallas, opening a sales and service location in San Antonio, TX, and expanding its Phoe-

nix facility. Other recent noteworthy achievements include expansion into apparel manufacturing with Flying Needle in Nicaragua, which can create a team set in individual sizes and a variety of decoration methods.

#3

MARTY LOTT
Founder and CEO

JEREMY LOTT
President

SanMar (asi/84863)
2014 RANK: 3

Its name a combination of founder Marty’s and his sister Sandra’s first names, SanMar is the very definition of a family company. Jeremy grew up at the Top 25 Apparel Supplier, working there every summer and learning each job before taking on his role as president. This year, the company, known for its diverse and stylish apparel offerings, launched more than 230 new products, adding OGIO, Endurance and Bulwark to the mix. 2015 brought another big milestone, as SanMar celebrated the 20-year anniversary of its popular Port Authority brand.

#4

NORMAN HULLINGER
CEO

alphabroder (asi/34063)
2014 RANK: 1

An avid guitar player, Hullinger continues to strike the right chord with alphabroder, the industry’s largest supplier, with \$815 million in sales in 2014. This year, the promotional powerhouse introduced Team 365 to offer authentic apparel and gear for athletes, coaches and supporters in 16 team-approved colors. “Color is a team’s identity,” Hullinger says. “It’s their brand.” Also of note, Hullinger was named to PPAI’s board of directors, helping to craft policies and adopt budgets for the association. Taking on this four-year voluntary position helps alphabroder better serve its more than 75,000

customers, Hullinger adds. Hullinger dropped three spots in this year's list, due to lower influence ratings than those around him.

#5

DEAN F. SHULMAN
*Senior Vice President,
Home Appliance and
Industrial Products
Divisions*

Brother International Corp.
2014 RANK: 8

Under Shulman's tenure, Brother has experienced incredible sales growth (\$2 billion in 2014), released a plethora of machines, won tech awards from the Consumer Electronics Show and partnered with TV's *Project Runway*. New releases include the Persona PRS100 – an affordably priced and easy-to-use single-needle embroidery machine with multi-needle versatility; and the ScanNCut 2, which has a larger LCD screen, a larger scanning mat and improved features. In 2016, the company will add three new sewing machines, which Shulman says “will thrill our customers at every level.” Shulman jumped up three spots this year, thanks to strong influence ratings from fellow Power 75 members and the industry at large.

#6

MIKE HOFFMAN
President
Gildan Printwear SRL

2014 RANK: 4

Under Hoffman's guidance, Gildan saw 6% sales growth in its printwear division for fiscal 2014. The maker of basic family apparel also saw 17% revenue growth internationally. Thanks to a focus on corporate social responsibility, Gildan once

again earned a spot on the Dow Jones Sustainability World Index (DJSI World), remaining the only North American apparel company to garner such a distinction. This year, the company acquired leading garment-dyed apparel supplier Comfort Colors, expanded its Anvil product line and enhanced the Gildan branded sport shirt line with softer fabrics using higher-end yarns.

#7

HITOSHI TAJIMA
Chairman
Tajima Industries Ltd.

2014 RANK: 6

Celebrating 71 years, Tajima Industries boasts more embroidery heads in operation than any other machine company. The Japan-based corporation manufactures everything from a modest single-head machine to a 56-head mammoth. Tajima has developed more than 3,000 embroidery machine models, sold in more than 100 countries; it recently released new air-driven clamp systems designed to minimize the tedious task of hooping, as well as the Tajima T-MARK series with an electronically controlled presser foot and a proprietary drive system. The family-owned company is proud of its cutting-edge research and development work, holding hundreds of patents as it works to raise the bar on efficiency and intuitive operation of embroidery machines.

#8

SHIRLEY CLARK
President
Madeira USA Ltd.

2014 RANK: 9

With Clark at the helm, embroidery supply company Madeira USA has put a renewed focus on client

education with free webinars and instructional videos. The firm has also brought its 30 years of expertise to ASI shows, sending representatives to promote the benefits of embroidery. Madeira has added colors to several thread lines, as well as debuting 75-weight thread and a line of 12-weight cotton-acrylic yarn. Another recent development is a multifunctional frame system, which allows lower-volume embroiderers to create individual patches on a framed film base without hand-trimming or laser-cutting.

#9

BILL WILSON
*Chief Product Officer
and Co-Founder*
Wilcom International Pty.

GREG ROSS
President
Wilcom America

2014 RANK: 11

Since 1979, Wilcom has been providing industry-leading software for embroidery, digital garment printing, laser cutting, rhinestones and more. Under Wilson and Ross, the company has given out tens of thousands of licenses to its TrueSizer program, a free app that allows anyone to view and edit digitized designs, whether or not they own Wilcom digitizing software. Based on the overwhelming response to the free version, Wilcom launched its first e-commerce product, TrueSizer Pro, last year. TrueSizer Pro gives users more functionality and flexibility than the free version. The company has also extended classroom training to the U.K. and Australia, due to customer demand.

#10

TAS TSONIS
CEO
BRIAN GOLDBERG
President
Pulse Microsystems

2014 RANK: 10

For more than 30 years, Pulse Microsystems has remained at the forefront of apparel-decoration technology, helping clients lower costs and increase profitability by streamlining orders and production. With Tsonis and Goldberg at the helm, the firm recently launched PulseCloud, which allows decorators to remotely monitor their machines and to edit, save and send work from mobile devices. Pulse also introduced the software-as-a-service model of PulseID and rolled out new features in its flagship Tajima DG15 software, including a monogram wizard. To house its expanding operations, the company has relocated to a larger office in Mississauga, ON.

#11

GÉRARD MÉTRAILLER
*Vice President,
Products, Graphics and
Productivity*
CorelDRAW

Corel Corp.
2014 RANK: 7

With its flagship graphics software CorelDRAW more than a quarter-century old, the Ottawa-based Corel Corp. continues to innovate with a broad range of products – from photo editing to productivity software. Métrailier and the rest of the management team have tripled the company's operating income over the last three years. Corel recently acquired ReviverSoft, which offers

THE
methodology

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

products to repair, optimize and maintain computers. Other Corel brands include Pinnacle, Roxio and WinZip. Métrailler and company dropped four spots this year, due to lower influence ratings from other Power 75 members and the industry at large.

#12
SCOTT SOMERVILLE
President
Hanes Activewear North America
Hanes Branded Printwear
(asi/59528)
2014 RANK: 12

This year, the iconic Hanes Beefy T turned 40, with billions sold worldwide. In fact, the apparel giant sells more T-shirts, socks and other wardrobe basics in the U.S. than any other company, with eight out of 10 households sporting the brand. Somerville has been with Hanes for well over two decades, helping position the company as a reliable, on-trend supplier. The \$5.3 billion brand continues to expand, acquiring Knights Apparel this year, helping it make the Fortune 500 list of America's largest companies for the first time. Hanes is one of five apparel companies on the list. The multinational company has also received multiple accolades for sustainability at its garment factories.

#13
JIMMY LAMB
Manager of Education
Sawgrass Technologies
2014 RANK: 16

It's been a busy year for renowned industry educator Lamb and Sawgrass Technologies, which released a variety of solutions, equipment and supplies for sublimation decoration. Among the new products is Creative Studio, an online HD product-decorating system that allows users to create designs from any Internet-connected computer, tablet or smartphone. Lamb helped develop a comprehensive library of educational resources for Sawgrass, including videos, webcasts and how-to guides for digital product decoration. Lamb's continued commitment to education, providing training for more than 15,000 Sawgrass customers, helped him jump up three spots on this year's Power 75.

#14
MARC HELD
Vice President of National Sales
Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788)
NEW

Family-owned apparel powerhouse Bodek and Rhodes remains the third-largest apparel supplier in the industry, with more than \$250 million in sales in 2014. Under Held's sales leadership, the supplier

recently expanded its warehouses in Philadelphia and Orlando, and now offers every style, color and size of Next Level Apparel (asi/73867) items at each location, making Bodek and Rhodes the largest Next Level wholesaler. Also of note, the company began offering Columbia apparel in August and improved the user interface of its website to better serve customers.

#15
GEORGE WESTPHAL
Co-Founder and CEO
Dakota Collectibles
2014 RANK: 15

Brothers George and Jerry Westphal were in the retail embroidery business when they recognized a gaping hole in the industry's offerings - stock embroidery designs. Together, they built Dakota Collectibles, the source for a large variety of high-quality stock embroidery designs that can be delivered in a timely manner. With thousands of unique and licensed designs available online, the company continues to release new collections regularly. In addition to stock designs, Dakota also offers rhinestone lanyards, keytags and other accessories.

#16
JENNIFER COX
ARCH RITCHIE
SUSAN RITCHIE
Founders

National Network of Embroidery Professionals
(asi/187622)
2014 RANK: 19

Led by Cox and the Ritchies, the NNEP continues to provide support and training to more than 1,850 apparel decoration professionals. This year, the membership organization launched a professional development program to help decorators acquire new skills. It also released the Joe Logo Marketing System to help business professionals stay connected with current and future customers. The system, Cox says,

allows members to master "the art of effective marketing automation." The NNEP has moved steadily up the Power 75, thanks to its longtime support of small businesses, this year rising three more spots.

#17
TED YAMAUE
President and CEO
Barudan Co. Ltd.
BOB STONE
Vice President of Sales
Barudan America Inc.
2014 RANK: 18

Barudan, a presence in the embroidery business for almost 60 years, distributes embroidery machines as well as digitizing and networking software to more than 100 countries. Most recently, it launched the XT series of single-head machines, boasting features like quicker operation and 100 memory locations. Under Yamaue and Stone, the company offers extensive training for customers and certified technicians, as well as onsite installation and training for all machine customers.

#18
JEFF ADAMS
PAUL ROHR
Principals
S&S Activewear (asi/84358)
2014 RANK: 17

Adams and Rohr certainly have a history. They met as roommates at the University of Illinois, and after pursuing separate careers, came back together to buy S&S Activewear in 1998. The Top 25 Apparel Supplier, with 2014 sales of \$210 million, has consolidated operations at its top three brands: S&S, Americana Sportswear and Eva Sportswear. The supplier can deliver to 45 states within one or two days. In addition, the firm implemented a LiveChat service on each of its company

ON THE
Record

... ON THE
IMPORTANCE OF
TECHNOLOGY



"I'm extremely excited to see the growth of cloud technology that addresses the complexity of the decoration/personalization industry. The growing competition for online technology will push further innovations, and that is a great thing for our industry for the next few years."

Martin Kristiawan, DecoNetwork

websites that's directly linked to customer service representatives for real-time responses.

#19

CRAIG MERTENS

President

Digital Art Solutions (asi/14970)

2014 RANK: 14

Under the leadership of Mertens, Digital Art Solutions has welcomed 1,500 new clients in the past year. Most likely, it's a result of a host of new offerings, including an enhanced version of its Rhinestone Multi-Decoration System, a three-day Multi-Decoration University training event and more than 40 live webcasts on multi-decoration and CorelDRAW. The company also added features to its rhinestone design software and released a new edition of its Campus Apparel Marketing System. Mertens dropped five spots on this year's list, after receiving lower influence ratings from other Power 75 members and the industry at large.

#20

MIKE ANGEL

Vice President of Sales and Marketing

Melco

2013 RANK: 20

Personalization is a major trend at retail, and machine and software maker Melco is capitalizing on that - offering automated online solutions to facilitate cost-effective one-off orders. "This is a game changer for the industry," Angel says of the technology. Other notable achievements include the release of the Melco Applications Network, which allows customers to ask industry experts about anything from puff embroidery to multimedia decoration. Also this year, Melco began sponsoring

nonprofits by offering them embroidery equipment and training to help facilitate fundraising efforts.

#21

IRA NEAMAN

President

Vantage Apparel (asi/93390)

2014 RANK: 21

With nearly two decades of achievement awards from PPAI under its belt, this Top 25 Apparel Supplier continues to innovate and improve. The nimble Vantage is an expert in a range of decoration services - including embroidery, screen printing, laser appliqué and sequins - and has remained dedicated to growing the capacity and efficiency of its offerings. Under Neaman's leadership, the \$46.8 million supplier-decorator added a new service this year: shipping single-piece decorated orders in 72 hours. The firm also won a Distributor Choice Award for Decorated Apparel from ASI.

#22

RAZGO LEE

President and CEO

Otto International (asi/75350)

2014 RANK: 22

With Lee at the helm, Otto International supplies 35,000 decorator and distributor customers with headwear, shirts, bags and more. The \$30 million company ranked 20th on this year's Top 25 Apparel Supplier list. Recent developments include preferred vendor status with the NNEP and accreditation with the Quality Certification Alliance (QCA), the independent nonprofit dedicated to helping promotional product suppliers produce safe and compliant items. Also new at Otto is a line of 100% polyester high-speed performance embroidery thread.



TED YAMAUE



BOB STONE

#17

*Reliable Machines,
Top-Notch Service*

TED YAMAUE

BOB STONE

Barudan

Barudan has been churning out reliable products for six decades. It manufactures computerized embroidery machines from one to 56 heads; it also offers chenille machines, lock-stitch zig-zag machines, sequin machines and several specialty machines.

Quality and service are paramount for the company, and because of that, there are thousands of machines in the field. "I visit customers from coast to coast, and it's not uncommon to walk into an account and see a 25-year-old Barudan still running and sewing beautiful stitches," says Bob Stone, vice president of sales at Barudan America. "That speaks volumes for our reliability and customer support in that we have the parts and knowledge to keep that machine running."

Support comes from a staff of professional technicians who provide a wide range of experiences and training. "We offer onsite training to customers who've purchased embroidery machines. We also offer specialized sewing head maintenance classes," Stone says, adding that they trained around 500 clients within the last year. "Throughout the industry, reliability and customer support have been hallmarks of the Barudan brand," he says. "It's important for customers to know that if they need a part or a question answered, we're there to assist them. It's probably the biggest reason that we have such a high customer retention rate. Our clients know they can count on us to keep their machines running."

And with humming machines and happy customers, the company has created a legion of fans in the embroidery world.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44



**Reliable Machines,
Top-Notch Service**
TED YAMAUE
BOB STONE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43

“Repeat sales are extremely important to us,” Stone says. “Current customers adding heads or expanding their embroidery operation is the bulk of our sales. One thing that makes working at Barudan so rewarding is the loyalty our customers have to us and the brand.” In fact, the company’s sales have increased approximately 4% to 6% over the last five years.

And as the company moves forward, it certainly won’t be resting on its laurels. Innovation and advancements are always on the front burner. “As a company, we strive to continue to make the most reliable embroidery machine in the industry,” Stone says. “We’ve done a very good job of doing that, but we continue to make our products even better. Improvements in metals, electronics and easier-to-maintain sewing heads are something that we’ve been working on in our R&D.” In

addition to machinery, the company is looking to develop specialty hoops and attachments.

Stone is more than a sales executive, though. He not only talks the talk, he also walks the walk. “I’m a pretty decent embroiderer,” he says. “I have single-head machines in my office that I’ll sew samples or test patterns for customers on, and I’ll do demos for potential clients. I’m still in awe of these machines and love to watch them sew. I’m very popular at Christmas, sewing stockings or monograms for the family.”

And, before moving to the machine side of the company, Stone was on the digitizing side, so he’s a “double threat.” “Being a digitizer, I can appreciate the quality of stitch that comes off a Barudan,” he says. Our machines are so precise that, as a digitizer, you don’t have to ‘cheat’ or make adjustments for the machine’s shortcomings – especially on small lettering.”

—Joe Haley

*“Our clients
know **THEY CAN
COUNT ON US**
to keep their
machines
running.”*

BOB STONE,
BARUDAN AMERICA INC.

#23

JOSH PEYSER

President

MV Sport/Weatherproof
(asi/68318)

2014 RANK: 26

Sustainability is a core value of family-owned apparel supplier MV Sport/Weatherproof. The \$70 million company generates more than 90% of its electricity needs via photovoltaic cells installed at its Long Island, NY, facility. Other green initiatives include a screen-printing reclamation system, motion-detected high-efficiency lighting and company-wide recycling. Peyser has never lost sight of MV Sport’s strategic business goals, though, recently acquiring The Game Headwear and American Threads Apparel, a line of USA-made sportswear. Both a Top Shop and Top 25 Apparel Supplier, MV Sport and Peyser have steadily moved up the Power 75, thanks to a continued commitment to quality products and service.

#24

SCOTT COLMAN

President and CEO

LINDA SHAHVARAN

General Manager

ColDesi Inc.

2014 RANK: 27

Equipment manufacturer ColDesi this year launched a new brand of commercial embroidery machines, the Avancé, which includes a 15-needle single-head, a four-head and a six-head option, along with a two-year, 100% trade-up guarantee from a single- to a multi-head machine. Also new is direct-to-garment printer the Viper2. ColDesi maintains a customer-centered approach, offering a comprehensive online training system that includes self-paced courses with walk-through presentations, videos, exercises and quizzes. Colman and Shahvaran continue to increase their standing on the Power 75, jumping up three spots, thanks to positive influence ratings from our industry survey.

#25

ED LEVY

Director of Software
Technologies

Hirsch International (asi/14982)

2014 RANK: 31

Hirsch’s software guru, Levy is dedicated to helping decorators streamline operations. In the last year, he expanded Hirsch’s automation efforts to include direct-to-garment printing, sublimation and online design, thanks to the introduction of PulseID software. A dedicated educator, Levy also expanded the company’s training department with more webinars and spearheaded a ground-up revamp of the company website. “I have always been a firm believer that education is a primary key to success,” he says. “We’re in an industry where no two jobs are the same, and a little education goes a long way in helping others to succeed.” That philosophy is key to Levy’s rapid climb up the Power 75 – this year, he jumped six spots.

#26

ANNA WINTOUR

Editor-in-Chief

Vogue

2014 RANK: 24

Recognized for her pageboy haircut and dark sunglasses, Wintour, who has headed up *Vogue* for more than 25 years, has been an influential member of the fashion world for decades, inspiring designers’ use of embroidery, appliqué and sequins from the runway to retail. This past year, Wintour was able to redefine fashion on the red carpet at the Tony Awards. She was called on to help bring the carpet to the next level of glam by dressing A-list celebrities and models. The Anna Wintour Costume Center opened in the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Costume Institute last May to honor her work in the fashion world.

#27

JENNIFER TSAI
Vice President of Operations

DANIEL TSAI
Vice President of Merchandising
Tri-Mountain (asi/92125)

2014 RANK: 23

Tri-Mountain has a slew of industry awards to its name, landing spots on this year's *Counselor* Top 40 Supplier and *Stitches* Top 25 Apparel Supplier lists, and getting a nod for its stylish Amelia tunic in this year's *Wearables* Apparel Design Awards. In 2015, the \$68.5 million company simplified its pricing structure, introducing one-price decoration for embroidery, heat transfer and laser etching. Under the Tsais' leadership, the supplier also launched 36 new styles across its five brands. The Tsais dropped four spots in this year's Power 75, due to lower influence ratings than those around them.

#28

BILLIE STATON
President
Staton Corporate and Casual (asi/89380)

2014 RANK: 25

Over the last three decades, Staton has seen a number of her peers consolidate or get bought out, but her Texas-based company continues to thrive. The \$131 million family-owned and operated supplier boasted an 11% jump in sales last year, taking the seventh spot in the Top 25 Apparel Supplier list for 2015. The growth is due in part to expanded corporate offerings, including brands such as Dunbrooke, Occunomix and Izod. In her time off, Staton enjoys reading and cooking, and recently took a trip to Florence and Chianti, which she dubbed "cooking and eating her way through Italy." Staton dropped three spots in this year's list, due to lower influence ratings from fellow Power 75 members and the industry at large.

#29

MARTIN KRISTIAMAN
CEO

BRENDEN PRAZNER
Product Evangelist
DecoNetwork Pty Ltd.

2014 RANK: 29

Turns out international business trips are good for more than just racking up frequent flyer miles. Kristiaman says he and Prazner have come up with many of their best ideas for DecoNetwork during "long-haul 12- to 15-hour flights and airport transits." With the release of the eighth version of its flagship e-commerce platform this year, DecoNetwork continues its quest to democratize mass personalization. "Custom decorators are now expected to produce and deliver quality merchandise faster and at ever-more competitive prices," Kristiaman says. DecoNetwork helps by offering a fully integrated B2B technology. The Australian company now boasts 24/7 customer support, with the recent opening of a U.K. branch and expanded staff at its Los Angeles office.

#30

JOHN MAHER
CEO

DAN ROBINSON
General Manager, Clarksville Warehouse and Decoration Operation

River's End Trading Co.
(asi/82588)

2014 RANK: 38

Since Maher took the helm in late 2013, he's been devoted to rebuilding the Top 25 Apparel Supplier from the ground up, helping it bring in an estimated \$100.3 million in 2014. River's End redesigned its website, revamped its sales force and invested into its decoration side in Clarksville, TN. Robinson, a longtime Stahl's (asi/88984) employee, came on board in April to oversee decoration operations, and the supplier

added heat-transfer technology to its imprinting capabilities. River's End has also increased product offerings, adding Greenlayer, Brooks Brothers and Columbia headwear to the mix.

#31

GENE FEIL
President
Dalco Athletic

2014 RANK: 30

Dalco's redesigned website showcases its commitment to improving user experience. The updated site includes e-commerce, better explanations of product lines, a newsletter and how-to videos. The company also turned its popular StockStitch program - which has more than 1,500 registered users - into a cloud-based subscription service to streamline software updates. With Feil at the helm, Dalco offers embroidery, heat-applied appliqué and lettering products for the spiritwear, team and cheer markets, plus a full line of official and referee uniforms and accessories. Its dye-sublimation merchandise line was recently expanded to include all-over garment decoration, in addition to items like seat covers and camp banners.

#32

MARK WASSON
President and CEO

SUSAN EDGE
National Sales Manager
Gunold USA

2014 RANK: 32

In 2015, Gunold USA put an emphasis on customer education, expanding its free online video

library with at least two embroidery demonstration videos each month. In the second quarter of this year, Wasson was asked to oversee operations of Gunold Canada, and has since launched a new website for Canadian customers with full online shopping and video demonstrations. Among the company's new products are Thermoseal, a waterproof embroidery material; Felty, a washable colored felt that can be used as a base fabric or appliqué; and 3-D Dense Puffy Foam for cleaner puff embroidery. The company also brought experienced embroiderers into sales and customer service positions to offer recommendations and advice to decorators at all levels.

#33

ERIC J. RUBIN
President
Blue Generation (asi/40653)

2013 RANK: 34

This 72-year-old family-owned and operated supplier continues to evolve. A Top 25 Apparel Supplier with 2014 sales of \$58 million, Blue Generation is focused on growing its 100% polyester moisture-wicking collection, with sales in that category skyrocketing in the first half of 2015, according to Rubin. The company also updated its comprehensive line of uniform items to keep up with the needs of the rapidly expanding service market. Also of note in 2015, Blue Generation rolled out a free freight shipping program for apparel distributors using one of its participating contract embroidery shops.

ON THE
Record

... ON THE ROLE
SOCIAL MEDIA
PLAYS



"Social networking provides a way not only to spot trends, but to start them."

Deborah Hurd, My Embroidery Mentor

#34

OWEN DUNNE
*Director, Embroidery
and Distributor Sales
Division*

American & Efird Inc.

2014 RANK: 35

American & Efird products, including threads produced for everything from industrial sewing to delicate handmade goods, are sold to thousands of customers in 95 countries. Dunne oversaw the recent introduction of Sunbrella Embroidery Thread that withstands prolonged exposure to sunlight and other atmospheric conditions. The company added two colors to its Heraldic color card for the Institute of Heraldry and welcomed Embroidery Owl as a distributor for clients in Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia and Delaware.

#35

JOYCE JAGGER
Owner

The Embroidery Coach

2014 RANK: 37

The 76-year-old Jagger would rather expand her embroidery education empire than settle down to a quiet life of retirement. The self-styled Embroidery Coach uses her decades of experience to help decorating-firm owners streamline operations and boost profits. Among her many satisfied clients is Top 25 Apparel Supplier Edwards Garment Co. (asi/51752). Jagger's newest online course, "How to Start an Embroidery Business," covers planning, pricing, marketing and high-quality design techniques

for newbies. Details on her other courses and training programs are available on her website, www.theembroiderycoach.com.

#36

RAY TITUS
CEO
MARK JOHNSON
President

EmbroidMe (asi/384000)

2013 RANK: 36

This year, EmbroidMe was named a Top 100 Global Franchise by Franchise Direct and took the 18th spot on *Counselor's* Top 40 Distributor list. With well over 300 stores in 12 countries, the decorating giant provides embroidery, printed apparel, custom apparel, promotional products, screen printing and personalized gifts through its franchise operations. Under the leadership of Titus and Johnson, the \$90.2 million company continues to research and develop new branding solutions for customers. A close relationship with manufacturers like Brother International Corp. ensures access to new products and applications when they come to market.

#37

RICK MOUTY
CEO

Profill Holdings (asi/300152)

2014 RANK: 33

Readily admitting his love affair with apparel fabric, Mouty says he isn't above sneaking a peek at the neck

labels on friends' and family's shirts. That passion for quality product, though, has also brought Profill Holdings continued success, with sales up 5.7% last year; the \$111 million firm ranked eighth on this year's Top 25 Apparel Suppliers list. Thanks to extensive research and development, Profill now offers high-quality glow-in-the-dark graphics, a popular choice for event giveaways. Mouty moved down four spots this year, after receiving lower influence ratings from other Power 75 members and the industry at large.

#38

KENT HAFFNER
*Director of Retail
Customization*

LIDS Sports Group

2014 RANK: 39

It's an exciting time at LIDS Sports Group. The U.S.-based retailer that specializes in headwear boasts over 1,000 stores, plus several e-commerce platforms. Under Haffner's guiding hand, LIDS received exclusive rights for official player customization for the MLB, NFL, NBA and NHL. The company also won the rights to reproduce select NCAA logos. LIDS recently launched the Indianapolis Colts Custom Zone and acquired Canada's Jersey City retail chain, significantly expanding its presence in western Canada.

#39

RYAN MOOR
Founder and CEO

JARED HOCH
*Vice President, Business
Development*

Ryonet Corp. (asi/528500)

2014 RANK: 40

Moore admits that he was a "horrible screen printer" when he launched Ryonet in 2004. That didn't stop him from growing his equipment supply company into the powerhouse it is today - on track to reach \$40 million in sales by year's end. In May, Ryonet launched *Screenprinting.com*, offering quick delivery of screen-printing

supplies and equipment. It also introduced customer loyalty rewards and a Preferred Supplier program. The company stresses customer education, with more than 2,000 students attending screen-printing classes at its seven locations in the past year.

#40

LARRY KAUFMAN
TIMOTHY CHECK

*Product Managers,
Professional Imaging*

Epson America Inc.

2014 RANK: 41

Epson is much more than just an equipment manufacturer - it's also a force to be reckoned with in the fashion world. Under Kaufman and Check, the company's professional imaging division showed off the power and versatility of dye sublimation during New York Fashion Week, hosting a "Digital Couture" show featuring the work of designers from across the Americas. In less than two years, more than 1,000 production companies have adopted Epson's SureColor F-Series dye-sub and direct-to-garment printers for fashion. Other recent offerings include the Epson Garment Creator, an easy-to-use T-shirt design program.

#41

NIAMH O'CONNOR
Art Director/evil Genius

KARLINE KOEHLER
*Marketing Director/
Ringmaster*

Urban Threads

2014 RANK: 46

Urban Threads is the last word in offbeat, alternative embroidery designs. O'Connor and Koehler have expertly leveraged social media to grow their vast network of fans, recently launching a customer photo gallery to further inspire. In the past year, Urban Threads focused on streamlining design and production, increasing sales and almost doubling product offerings. Embracing their differences has helped the Urban

ON THE
Record

... ON CHALLENGING
MARKET CONDITIONS



"With the recent volatility in the markets, customers may be hesitant to increase their budgets. Pair this with increasing labor and freight costs, and business owners will need to be resourceful to maintain positive momentum."

Marc Held, Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788)

Threads team succeed, O'Connor says: "Despite what all our grade school teachers warned us about, the staff has all managed to find a fun and inspiring career even with tattoos, colored hair and piercings." O'Connor and company continue to move up the Power 75, jumping up five spots, thanks to a unique blend of quirky but affordable stock designs.

#42

SCOTT ALLEN
President
PERRY PINTZOW
Partner
InkSoft
NEW

With its cutting-edge e-commerce and business automation software, InkSoft is leading decorators into the digital age. Under Allen and Pintzow's leadership, the young New Mexico-based firm has grown rapidly, from annual revenues of \$100,000 in 2010 to \$3.46 million last year. InkSoft's meteoric rise was recognized by business magazine *Inc.*, which ranked it the third fastest-growing private company in New Mexico this year, placing it at the 573rd spot on the national *Inc.* 5000 list. InkSoft has partnered with a slew of equipment manufacturers and suppliers, integrating technology and catalogs seamlessly into its Design Studio software. The firm is also committed to education, regularly publishing training blog posts, videos and other materials for its decorator customers.

#43

FRANK PROKATOR
Owner and Founder
The Embroidery Network and Steel Town Graphics
2014 RANK: 38

Prokator's Embroidery Network, an online training resource, has more than 8,000 registered users from over 20 countries. The site, which gets hundreds of hits daily, includes technical articles, free and fee-

based videos, webinars, newsletters, designs and more. In the last year, the company has added information on direct-to-garment, simulated process and four-color process printing. Prokator also released a DVD training series to teach decorators how to digitize. Prokator dropped five spots in this year's list, after receiving lower influence ratings than others around him.

#44

SCOTT M. RITTER
President
SMR Software Inc. and DAX
2014 RANK: 42

It's been about two decades since Ritter organized the first Decorated Apparel Expo (DAX), and the trade show connecting garment decorators with suppliers continues to grow. The annual expos in Kansas City, KS; Treasure Island, MN; and Tinley Park, IL, draw more than 7,000 attendees each year. Ritter is also a sought-after industry writer, with more than 300 educational articles under his belt. SMR provides software, like BuzzEdit, to help embroidery and screen-printing professionals save time and effort.

#45

GARY SCHULTZ
CEO
RICK CESERE
Executive Vice President
Edwards Garment Co.
(asi/51752)
2014 RANK: 45

Uniform and corporate apparel supplier Edwards Garment Co. continues to grow revenue, with sales of \$61.3 million last year - a 40% overall increase since 2010. Schultz and Cesere have helped position the company on the Top 25 Apparel Suppliers list for the past four years. The company sources its products from socially and safety-compliant factories, and has been 98.5% in stock for nearly two years. Among the company's newest offerings are more than 40 styles of polos, wash-



SCOTT ALLEN



PERRY PINTZOW

#42

Silicon Valley in Albuquerque
SCOTT ALLEN
PERRY PINTZOW
InkSoft

With headquarters in Albuquerque, NM, InkSoft is a thousand miles from Silicon Valley. But founders Scott Allen and Perry Pintzow treat their fast-growing software company like an extension of that tech enclave. Among the many employee perks at InkSoft are a cereal and snack station, coffee bar, catered lunches and reimbursed yoga and personal training sessions. Add in competitive health benefits and up-to-date equipment, and you've created a winning recipe for employee success and satisfaction. "You spend a tremendous amount of your day at work, so you might as well enjoy what you do," Allen says. "We try to make the office as positive as we can."

InkSoft popped onto the scene six years ago, one of several software solutions for the decorated-apparel industry. The company helps automate day-to-day business operations - including online design, quoting, art approvals, invoicing, e-commerce and marketing - so decorators can focus on production. Since launching, InkSoft has continued to see amazing success, named to *Inc.* magazine's list of the nation's fastest-growing private companies this year and last. Annual revenues have skyrocketed from \$100,000 in 2010 to nearly \$3.5 million last year. "We have luckily found ourselves at the top of the segment in this industry. This niche is really catching on," Allen says. "People are really starting to understand the power of online stores and e-commerce. ... The marketplace is pretty much telling this industry that they need to get online and get current."

The company is committed to customer education, which starts with the "onboarding process" for new clients. InkSoft

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48



*Silicon Valley in
Albuquerque*

SCOTT ALLEN
PERRY PINTZOW

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 47

wants to make sure users really understand the software and its capabilities, says JP Hunt, another company founder and the vice president of sales and marketing. “So many companies are glad to take your money and then say, ‘Go figure it out yourself,’” he says. “We want to help them be a customer for life.” Other educational resources include InkSoft’s training blog, with a mix of software-specific tips and tricks and business-building advice. The company also generates white papers, videos and podcasts on topics like creating successful online fundraising sites and “30 Marketing Tips in 30 Days.”

InkSoft is so confident in its business approach, Allen says, that it doesn’t make customers sign contracts for access to the software. Instead, everyone who uses InkSoft pays for it on a month-to-month basis. “We’re not trying to lock them into anything,” he says. “We want them to be successful, and we’re going to help them every step of the way.”

Among its many innovations, InkSoft recently released software allowing its customers to easily create fundraising Web stores. Still in its infancy, the software has already led to several dramatically successful charitable campaigns. Midwest Impressions in Elkhorn, NE, for example generated a hair over \$60,000 in one week, in support of the Kerrie Orozco Memorial Fund.

Also important to InkSoft is integrating the software into existing technology. To that end, the company has partnered with equipment manufacturers like Brother and Epson to make its software seamlessly integrate with direct-to-garment technology. InkSoft regularly adds apparel company catalogs to its online design program, so it’s easier for customers to provide garments for a wide range of applications and markets. In February, InkSoft joined the National Network of Embroidery Professionals (NNEP).

The company expects to see continued growth in the future, thanks to its ongoing commitment to industry-defining innovation. “You can’t just wave a flag in the corner and say you’re quality. You have to really live it. We strive for perfection, and by striving, we’re more perfect than we would be otherwise,” Allen says. “We’re not looking to be the biggest, but we are looking to be the best, and by being the best, we’re enjoying very nice growth.” – TH

able suiting, noniron dress shirts and restaurant and hospitality clothing.

#46

JAMES BUCK
President
MESA Distributors Inc.
(asi/16004)
2014 RANK: 43

A hands-on executive who can still occasionally be found tinkering with machines, Buck is always looking to improve the equipment and supplies MESA offers. In the last year, the company has added multitasking and onboard lettering to the extra-large touchscreen control panels of its Highland embroidery machines. The machines also now come with universal hooping stations. Other new offerings include the Summit Fire direct-to-garment printer, three models of OKI laser-transfer printers and a new line of Puffy Foam. Buck moved down three spots this year, due to lower influence ratings from fellow Power 75 members and the industry at large.

#47

CHRISTOPHER BERNAT
Chief Revenue Officer
JACKSON BURNETT IV
President
Vapor Apparel (asi/93396)
2014 RANK: 47

Under the leadership of Bernat and Burnett, Vapor Apparel has been ranked as one of the 25 fastest-growing companies in South Carolina, with over 30% growth last year. The maker of sublimation-ready apparel, with a significant cut-and-sew operation, boasts several large private-label accounts in the outdoor retail space. The innovative and award-winning supplier recently launched a moisture-wicking, sun-protective line; according to Bernat, Vapor Solar Performance apparel has “made an enormous impact on the market.”

#48

JOEL FREET
CEO
CHRIS YAW
Corporate Business Director
Cutter and Buck (asi/47965)
2014 RANK: 48

Cutter and Buck isn’t a Top 25 Apparel Supplier for nothing. Under Freet and Yaw, the company successfully maintained its reputation as a go-to supplier for golf and fashion retail apparel. Most recently, it launched CBUK, a golf-inspired apparel line, as well as its Clique Basics collection, an extensive cotton/fleece sweatshirt program that offers four styles, 45 colors and youth and adult sizes up to 7XL. The *Stitches* Top Shop expanded decoration capabilities significantly in the past year, most notably with a 3-D emblem heat-transfer process. The company also extended its service hours and quickened already fast turnaround times.

#49

PAUL ASHWORTH
CEO and President
BERNINA of America
2014 RANK: 50

Ashworth jokes that he is “living proof you can drink and sew.” The Englishman, who is the American face of a Swiss company, joined BERNINA four years ago after nearly two decades in the wine and spirits industry. Under Ashworth’s leadership, BERNINA boasts more than 400 U.S. dealers. The company recently entered the “prosumer” market, launching commercial-quality long-arm quilting machines and a 16-needle embroidery machine. Other releases include the BERNINA 880 Sterling Edition, created in collaboration with quilt designer Sarah Vedeler, known for creating applique using an embroidery machine. The BERNINA 7 series was re-released with a new advance hook system.

#50

RICHARD HIRSCH
Managing Director
Amann USA

2014 RANK: 44

With nearly 30 years of experience in the decorated-apparel world, Hirsch knows that one of the biggest challenges his customers face is producing tiny lettering with ease. That's why his one-stop embroidery supply shop, Amann USA, recently launched Serafil 200, an extra-fine thread that enables clean micro-lettering, even for beginning digitizers. Other new products include a range of sewing threads that can be adapted to embroidery, like heavier weights to create textured looks. This summer, Amann also beefed up its online presence, offering mobile-supported e-commerce. Hirsch dropped six spots in this year's Power 75, after receiving lower influence ratings than those around him.

#51

JOHN P. COLMAN
Owner
SETH J. SCHLEGEL
General Manager
Pantograms Manufacturing

2014 RANK: 49

With Colman and Schlegel at the helm, Pantograms has helped more than 10,000 embroiderers succeed. The equipment and supply company has sold more than 12,000 machines in the U.S., including the GS1501, its 15-needle embroidery machine. Other products include easy-to-peel transfer paper for dark substrates. Pantograms also has a strong educational presence, regularly releasing YouTube tutorials and offering the Embroidery Academy, a two-day intense onsite training course that includes operating instructions and tips on running an effective embroidery business.

#52

BARRY LIPSETT
President and CEO
Charles River Apparel
(asi/44620)

2014 RANK: 52

A frustrated jock who didn't make the cut on his high school basketball team, Lipsett, now 56, is still plugging away at sports, shooting hoops in an "over the hill" league and completing high-mile charity bike rides. He brings the same tenacity to Charles River Apparel, the \$40 million company founded by his father, Walter, 32 years ago. Known initially for high-quality rainwear and outerwear, the New England company, ranked 18th on this year's Top 25 Apparel Suppliers list, continues to expand, adding polos, performance tees and other products. Its new ladies' cardigan wrap (5555), made of Supima cotton, has been a strong seller. Robust growth of over 18% in the last 12 months has allowed Charles River to reinvest in talent - expanding its workforce by more than 20% since 2014.

#53

LEE CAROSELLI BARNES
Owner and Designer
Balboa Threadworks
Embroidery Design

2014 RANK: 54

Caroselli Barnes made a name for herself by breaking all the rules of digitizing. The result of that rebellion? Her library of stock embroidery - Balboa Threadworks - is packed with unbelievably realistic designs. The veteran puncher dedicated herself to teaching her unconventional, but universally applicable, methods through videos, live classes, tutorials and her website, *LearnToDigitize.net*. She recently expanded her educational efforts, adding six new seminars across the country, in addition to the monthly seminars she offers in digitizing and editing.

#54

JOHNNY SHELL
Vice President of Technical Services
Specialty Graphic Imaging Association (SGIA)

2014 RANK: 53

Shell has represented SGIA for nearly 20 years, helping make its annual trade show - the SGIA Expo - into one of the top 100 in the U.S. The SGIA offers more than 20 instructional webinars in garment decoration, with attendees that number in the thousands. The organization is also concerned with training the next generation of decorators, establishing an SGIA Scholarship and improving the screen printing, imaging and sublimation competitions held at the SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference.

#55

ERICH CAMPBELL
Digitizer and E-Commerce Manager
Black Duck Embroidery and Screen Printing (asi/700415)

2014 RANK: 62

An award-winning educator, Campbell has carved a niche as a social media guru and champion of high-quality digitizing. Employed by one of the largest decorators in the Southwest, Campbell has created decorated apparel and other props for the likes of acclaimed TV shows *Breaking Bad* and *Better Call Saul*. In his off time, Campbell is a frequent contributor to trade magazines, blogs and other industry resources. Recent accolades

include a listener-voted Reggie Award for being the most helpful, granted by popular industry podcast, 2 Regular Guys. Campbell's untiring dedication to sharing information about the decorated-apparel business has helped him climb steadily up the Power 75, jumping seven spots this year.

#56

JAY MALANGA
President
ShopWorks

2014 RANK: 55

Malanga once rubbed elbows with astronauts, as a mechanical engineer working on a space shuttle-launched satellite. These days, the methodically minded leader engages in more down-to-earth pursuits: heading up a software company devoted to meeting the needs of the decorated-apparel industry. In the past year, ShopWorks has made significant improvements to the order entry interface, accounting functionality and touchscreen interface of foundational product OnSite. ProofStuff, a program that allows customers to track a client's status, was also updated. Under Malanga's leadership, ShopWorks saw 15% year-over-year growth in the first half of 2015.

#57

SCOTT FRESENER
Director
T-Biz Network International LLC

2014 RANK: 51

This veteran screen printer continues to educate the next

ON THE
Record

... ON THE
CHALLENGE OF
IMPROVING VALUE



"Customers are always looking for new, innovative products with more perceived value."

Jeff Clark, Berne Apparel (asi/40260)



MARSHALL ATKINSON

#63 *The Multitasker*
**MARSHALL
ATKINSON**

Visual Impressions Inc.
and Ink to the People

When Marshall Atkinson was in college at Florida State, printing shirts was just a hobby. In fact, he planned to go to graduate school for architecture. But he saw an opportunity to sell printed shirts to fraternities and sororities at his alma mater, and started his own small printing business. “I wanted no student loans,” he says. “PCs were new then, and I was already doing some animation, but I knew nothing about graphics software.”

But that didn’t stop a Florida-based print shop from hiring Atkinson after taking notice of his quality work. He spent 14 years there as the art director and four years as the vice president of operations. But in 2010, his employer, still feeling the effects of the 2008 recession, was forced to let him go. Atkinson hit the ground running and used his hard-won expertise to launch a shop operations consultancy in 2011. One of the companies slated for an efficiency study was Visual Impressions, located in Milwaukee. “I put together a 30-page report on how they could improve their processes,” Atkinson says. “They thanked me and asked me to be chief operating officer.”

Atkinson relocated to Milwaukee from Florida, and has spent the past four years concentrating on efficiency, training, communications and sustainability at the large operation. “Basically, I look at how we can do things better,” he says. “There’s always a way to improve on something.” Currently, the shop operates 14

CONTINUED ON PAGE 52

generation through regular hands-on boot camps and his comprehensive T-Biz Network website. This year, he launched a new weekly industry Internet video show, *The T-Shirt Report*, with Richard Greaves to discuss news, tech talk, common support questions and more. Fresener also recently released T-Seps 3.5.1 - the latest update to his color-separation software. Fresener fell six spots on this year’s list, after receiving lower influence ratings in the *Stitches Power 75* survey.

#58
DEBORAH HURD

Owner
My Embroidery Mentor
2014 RANK: 60

Through her website, *MyEmbroideryMentor.com*, and associated Facebook page, Hurd is dedicated to education: offering advice, answering questions and posting videos and tutorials for decorating apparel and accessories. Her latest innovation is the “Embroiderer’s Compass,” a wheel that guides users to the proper stabilizer, needle and hooping technique for a variety of materials. In addition, she acts as national sales manager for The Embroidery Store and teaches four classes on *Craftsy.com*.

#59
AKIRA IKEDA

Chairman
**HISAYUKI
KOBAYASHI**
President
Mimaki USA
2014 RANK: 58

A leading manufacturer of wide-format inkjet printers and cutting machines, Mimaki helps customers create rich images on signs, industrial products, apparel and textiles. Led by Ikeda and Kobayashi, the Nagano, Japan-based company has a strong foothold in the U.S. (with offices in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles and New Jersey) and Europe, as well as in the

emerging markets of China, India, Brazil and Indonesia. This global reach brought sales growth of 9% in 2014. Earlier this year, Kobayashi announced that Mimaki is developing a full-color 3-D printer. In addition, it is committed to doubling production capabilities.

#60
CHRIS WALDICK
Founder and President
JCW Software LLC
2014 RANK: 57

Business management software FastManager is 15 years old, but Waldick and company continue to make improvements to help decorators easily create invoices, process payments, schedule production and simplify quoting. The company launched FastManager Resource, a LinkedIn group to increase user interaction. This year, JCW Software is launching FastProofs, a site for users to keep track of customer approvals. The Web version of FastManager, FM5, is also getting an overhaul, with a slew of new features.

#61
JON HAYS
President
**Heritage Sportswear powered
by Virginia T’s (asi/60582)**
2014 RANK: 56

Under Hays’ leadership, Heritage Sportswear powered by Virginia T’s nabbed the sixth rung on the Top 25 Apparel Suppliers list, with \$200 million in sales last year, an impressive year-over-year increase of about 85%. The supplier has shown a commitment to investment and improvement, expanding its sales team with more inside telephone salespeople. The firm continues to add new brands and styles to its lineup, including popular items from Next Level Apparel (asi/73867). Hays dropped five spots this year, after receiving lower influence ratings than others around him on the list in the 2015 *Stitches Power 75* survey.

#62

JESSE, CHARLIE MARGIE MACK

Co-Owners

**HoopMaster/Midwest
Products Inc.**

2014 RANK: 66

With tens of thousands of products sold, the Mack family is mighty indeed. The company's magnetic Mighty Hoops, which can accommodate cumbersome items like saddle pads, wine bags, stuffed animals and thick workwear, have a fierce and devoted following, including well-known retailers like Williams-Sonoma, Ralph Lauren and Disney. In addition to rising U.S. demand, Midwest Products is making inroads in the international market, with a presence in 66 countries. The Macks' legions of fans have helped the family rise steadily on the Power 75; case in point, this year's four-spot upward bump.

#63

MARSHALL ATKINSON

Chief Operating Officer

Visual Impressions

NEW

Since his early days screen printing for fraternities and sororities at Florida State, Atkinson has been making a name for himself as an expert in shop operations. Visual Impressions, the high-volume contract shop he oversees in Milwaukee, offers screen printing, direct-to-garment printing and embroidery. "We find out what our customers want, and help them before our competitor does," he says. "We're known as industry leaders, and we do things a little differently." Atkinson also maintains the popular industry blog, *Atkinsonshirt.com*, contributes to trade magazines, teaches at trade shows, offers consulting services and serves on the SGIA board of directors.

#64

FRANK MA

President

RiCOMA International Corp.

2014 RANK: 64

Founded in 1998, embroidery machine manufacturer RiCOMA has nurtured a global network that spans more than 120 countries. Ma takes customer feedback seriously, leading a research and development team devoted to turning decorators' needs into reality. That customer-focused R&D has led to the MT and CHT series of embroidery machines, launched in the past year. The approach has also helped RiCOMA's bottom line, boosting global sales by about 30% this year.

#65

RANDY CARR

President and CEO

NICOLAS RESTREPO

Vice President of Sales

World Emblem International

(asi/98264)

2014 RANK: 63

Carr's \$25 million company is based in Florida, but as its name suggests, World Emblem has a global reach, with factories around the world. A recent partnership with a firm in Italy and Japan resulted in the innovative FlexStyle product line – a flexible, versatile emblem that comes in a number of textures, including metallic, and can be adhered to nearly any surface. "This is one product you have to see to truly appreciate," Carr boasts. World Emblem also launched a mobile app, allowing sales representatives to design apparel decoration for end-users. Such innovations have helped boost sales by 14% in the last year.



FRANK MA

#64

The Globetrotter

FRANK MA

**RiCOMA International
Corp.**

Frank Ma first entered the decorated-apparel industry making his living as a distributor of sewing machines. But it wasn't long before he discovered the embroidery machine industry by chance. "I found it interesting and I did a lot of research," he says. "I realized that there was great opportunity in the embroidery business for high-quality, value-priced products. I founded RiCOMA International Corp. in 1998 to fill that niche."

Today, RiCOMA is headquartered in Doral, FL, and specializes in the manufacturing and distribution of domestic and industrial embroidery machines. The company offers heat-press machines, sewing machines, cutting machines, steam presses and digitizing software, not to mention a full menu of training, service and support options for customers.

"Because we're a global company, we always keep a global perspective in mind," says Ma, "and we diversify our products to meet the specific needs of customers in different countries." To find out what customers are looking for, RiCOMA relies on its in-house R&D team to gather and synthesize client feedback from around the globe, and then incorporates requested features and technologies into new releases as often as possible.

Over the past year, RiCOMA has rolled out two new machine series: The MT Series includes a portable/tabletop two-head machine, what Ma calls "revolutionary" and "the world's first." Meanwhile, the CHT Series of multi-head machines features a new 10" touchscreen control panel. "This new controller evolved

CONTINUED ON PAGE 53



The Multitasker
MARSHALL ATKINSON

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 50

automatic screen-printing presses on two shifts, 106 embroidery heads and a number of Kornit digital printers.

In addition to advising Visual Impressions, he continues to maintain his blog at *Atkinsontshirt.com*, as well as contribute to industry publications, ghostwrite posts on other blogs and speak at shows. He's also involved with the Sustainable Green Printing Partnership, was recently nominated for the board of SGIA and has become increasingly involved with the Chefs at PromoKitchen.

"I work alongside a great group of talented, skilled people who are quality-focused. WE CREATE TRUST AND VALUE for our clients."

MARSHALL ATKINSON, VISUAL IMPRESSIONS AND INK TO THE PEOPLE

"I just really try to give back," Atkinson says. "People thank me constantly for the information. The industry overall would do well with more transparency. Everyone wants to keep things secret, but if you let people know you provide value, they'll rush to your door."

Atkinson takes that same approach to Visual Impressions, making sure the firm invests in the latest technology, experiments with different decoration techniques and gives people a look at their work. "We're on all the major social media sites so we can show people what we do," he says. "I work alongside a great group of talented, skilled people who are quality-focused. We create trust and value for our clients." — *Sara Lavenduski*

#66

RANDI BLUMENTHAL-JOSEPH

President

LIZABETH HATHAWAY

Creative Manager

Penn Emblem Co. (asi/77120)

2014 RANK: 69

For five years, self-described "workaholic" Blumenthal-Joseph has led the pack at Penn Emblem, the company her grandfather founded in 1947. She and Hathaway are committed to reaching new markets and expanding product lines, introducing dye-sublimation laser-cut patches, PennFlex custom silicone and PVC patches and PennTrans heat transfers with 18 different effects in the last year. Penn Emblem also acquired ImprintsUSA and launched a health-care division. Other changes include a well-defined social media strategy and a streamlined ordering process. The nimble company, which revisits its strategic plan quarterly, has slowly climbed the Power 75 - edging up three spots this year - thanks to its willingness to heed customer feedback and a diversified growth strategy.

#67

JOANNA GRANT

Vice President,

Graphic Production

JAY BUSSELLE

Business Development

Affinity Express (asi/33149)

2014 RANK: 65

Founded in 2000, Affinity Express serves the promotional industry primarily through Idea Custom Solutions, offering digitizing, vector artwork, image editing, virtual samples, marketing materials and order management services to suppliers and distributors. Under the guidance of Grant and Busselle, the company recently redesigned its e-newsletter with more industry-specific educational content. A new logo, website and tagline communicate the company's creativity and commitment to being more than just a vendor.

#68

CLAUDIO LEW
CEO

DANIEL FUCCI

U.S. Director

Sierra Technology Group

2014 RANK: 61

Under the leadership of Lew and Fucci, the Argentina-based Sierra Technology Group continues to expand. The 27-year-old software and equipment company released its latest software - version 15 - and merged its embroidery and hotfix software into a single application, making it more convenient for decorators. A new Web-based product, PhotoBling, allows users to convert portraits into hotfix automatically. Sierra also introduced a subscription-based model of its commercial embroidery software, Embroidery Office LIVE. The company drops seven spots on this year's list, after receiving significantly lower influence ratings from other Power 75 members and the industry at large.

#69

GAYLE ZRELIK

President

KRISTINE SHREVE

Director of Marketing

EnMart and Ensign Emblem

2014 RANK: 68

Founded by industry veteran Zrelia in 2006, EnMart, a subsidiary of Ensign Emblem, sells embroidery and sublimation supplies to commercial decorators. The company has amassed thousands of customers, attracted by its interactive online portals with intuitive product browsing and ample technical training. Shreve has been paramount in raising awareness of EnMart, keeping active on social media and sharing content on her blogs, SubliStuff and Embroidery Talk. This year, the firm promoted the use of metallic thread by distributing samples to decorators.

#70

JAMIE CHALMERS

Founder and CEO

Mr. X Stitch

2014 RANK: 70

The self-dubbed kingpin of contemporary embroidery, Chalmers maintains the edgy, educational crafting blog, *MrXStitch.com*, which welcomes tens of thousands of visitors each month. In the past year, Chalmers published more than 300 posts and successfully leveraged Instagram and Pinterest to spotlight niche needlecraft methods, like Temari and Kimekomi. He's attended high-profile craft events throughout his native United Kingdom, delivering workshops and seeking advertisers. New columns on Chalmers' blog include "Hand & Lock," focusing on high-end fashion embroidery, and "The Funk Files," featuring interviews of pioneering embroidery artists.

#71

MITCHELL FERSTEN

President

Fersten Worldwide (asi/53974)

2014 RANK: 67

A powerhouse apparel supplier and unparalleled decorator, Fersten Worldwide is known for the innovative styling and design of its blank goods and the diversity of its decoration capabilities. The newest additions to its arsenal include heat-transfer appliques, rubber patches, laser-etched leather patches and debossed leather patches. Fersten's Quebec, Canada-based company also expanded its outerwear, introducing three new reversible jackets that meet safety standards. Fersten drops four spots on this year's Power 75, after receiving lower influence ratings than others around him.

#72

JULIUS SOBIZACK

President

ZSK Stickmaschinen Germany

ANDREA BOMMARITO

Embroidery Specialist

ZSK Machines (Notcina Corp.)

NEW

Led by Sobizack, this German company has been in the embroidery machine business for more than 140 years and continues to grow, expanding its offerings in the U.S. market. In the past year, ZSK offered up a number of technological innovations, including the introduction of the smallest tubular arm in the industry, according to ZSK. A new management integration system allows shops to check, analyze and manage machinery from anywhere, at any time. A self-styled "embroidery geek," Bommarito has been actively promoting machine embroidery and ZSK at trade shows and the popular *2 Regular Guys* industry podcast.

#73

VALENTINO GARAVANI

Founder

Valentino SpA Co.

NEW

In the decades since his 1962 international debut, Valentino has become the standard for all that's elegant, feminine and uncomplicatedly beautiful. Even beyond the impeccable perfection of his clothes, the lifestyle embodied by Valentino and his inseparable partner Giancarlo Giammetti set an example for all who ever aspired to - or demanded - their heaven on earth. Valentino's embellished clothes are for those ideal moments, the flawless days and incomparable nights that most can only dream of experiencing.



The Globetrotter

FRANK MA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 51

from our 1501 TC single-head control panel," says Ma, "so it's much easier for our customers to learn to operate when they upgrade from our single-heads to multi-heads."

The client-centered approach has been successful, Ma says. "The customer satisfaction and success we've seen in recent years keeps me motivated," he explains. "At the same time, our employees have the opportunity to grow with the company and advance their own careers."

Over the past year, the company relocated to a larger facility in order to increase production capacity dramatically and fill clients' orders even more quickly. They've also implemented additional financing options for clients, giving them access to more favorable financing terms, and have expanded the company's worldwide network from 90 countries to more than 120 in which clients are served. Since this time last year, global sales have increased by approximately 30%. — SL

"We always keep a global perspective in mind, and WE DIVERSIFY OUR PRODUCTS to meet the specific needs of customers in different countries."

FRANK MA, RICOMA INTERNATIONAL CORP.

ON THE *Record*

... ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SMART HIRING



"People drive this business. No matter if it's sales or production, the people make decoration what it is. Their skills, their personalities, their drive or lack thereof - that's what forms the backbone of any shop. Without the right people and the right sources of motivation, nothing can be accomplished."

Erich Campbell, *Black Duck Embroidery and Screen Printing* (asi/700415)



VALENTINO GARAVANI

#73

Living La Dolce Vita
VALENTINO GARAVANI
Valentino SpA Co.

If the concept of luxury were to be rendered into human form, its walking, talking embodiment would be Valentino Garavani – better known to the *haute* and the *basse* alike simply as Valentino.

Born in Lombardy, Northern Italy, the teenage Valentino dreamed of Hollywood idols in their untouchable glamour, a vision which soon propelled him to Paris to pursue his ideal of beauty. His education at the most elite of Parisian fashion schools, and apprenticeships under some of the city's most influential designers, helped the young designer develop his singular elegance – but it wasn't until he returned to Rome in 1959 that his own star began to rise to its inevitable heights.

“Fashion is not so complex. IT IS ABOUT MAKING A WOMAN BEAUTIFUL.”

VALENTINO, VALENTINO SPA CO.

Within a year of his return to Italy, two significant events occurred to help set Valentino's career on its course. The first was the introduction of his now-signature red dress, in a strikingly rich hue soon to be known as simply “Valentino red.”

The second event, however, is the one that possibly kept the famously business-averse designer out of “the red” himself, due to his penchant for good living and the spare-no-expense materials used to create some of his earliest dresses. This event was Valentino's first encounter with the man who would soon become his lover and, more importantly, his lifetime business partner: Giancarlo Giammetti. “Giammetti is one of the canniest businessmen in Europe,” says the *New Yorker's* Michael Specter, who penned a lengthy article on the pair in 2005. It was Giammetti's business acumen that allowed Valentino to withdraw into his own rarefied world of pure abstraction and design, from which bloomed his creations.

“I pay no attention to this life,” Valentino told *Vanity Fair* in 2004. “I'm always locked in my studio. I'm very grateful to Giancarlo, because he hides things from me to keep me in a good mood.” With Giammetti guiding the marketing, Valentino's designs attracted the most discerning clients. In 1964, one who'd have the biggest effect on Valentino, professionally and personally, came calling.

In the midst of her mourning over the loss of her husband, Jacqueline Kennedy by happenstance encountered a Valentino ensemble worn by a friend of the designer. Even in her bereavement, the first lady wasn't immune to the lure of inspired Italian couture and quickly arranged to purchase a half-dozen of Valentino's outfits. “At the beginning I was Mr. Valentino and she was Mrs. Kennedy,” he told *Vanity Fair*. “Then it was Jackie and Valentino, and we became very, very close friends.” That relationship catapulted Valentino even further into the highest strata of fashion.

Valentino told the *New Yorker*: “Fashion is not so complex. It is about making a woman beautiful.” That relentless pursuit of beauty above all else – divorced from the politics of the era or the impulse to reinterpret or recontextualize feminine allure – is what makes the designer and his creations a benchmark of exquisite living. – *Chuck Zak*

#74

JEFF CLARK
Promotional Products Market Segment Coordinator

CHRIS MINER
Vice President, Sales and Marketing
Berne Apparel (asi/40260)

NEW

Century-old Berne Apparel is making a major push into the promotional products sector, under the guidance of Clark and Miner. The workwear maker recently launched a website (www.bernepromo.com) specifically for that segment and has focused on creating effective marketing campaigns to attract key players in the promotional industry. The strategy is working, with the company boasting 28% growth year-over-year. New products from Berne include a concealed carry jacket (CCW Jacket) and an unlined quarter-zip (SP450).

#75

PAULA SCHNEIDER
CEO

American Apparel (asi/35297)

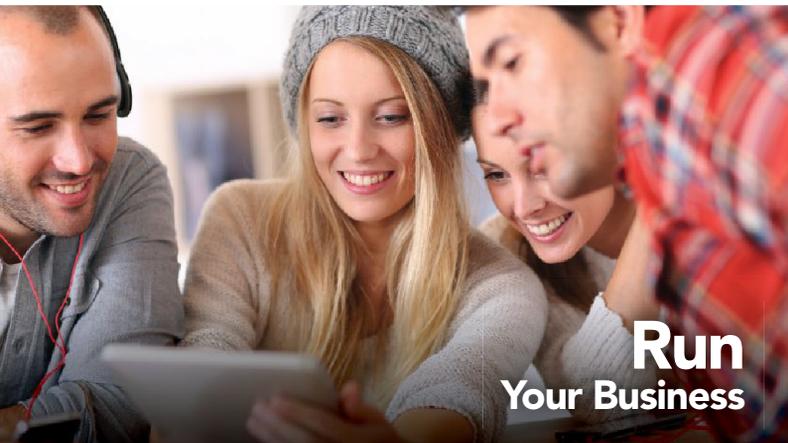
NEW

Schneider took over the beleaguered brand in January, after founder and former CEO Dov Charney was booted for reports of misconduct. Prior to American Apparel, Schneider worked at various apparel companies, including Warnaco, BCBG Max Azria and Laundry by Shelli Segal. Despite rolling out \$30 million in cost-cutting measures and other sweeping changes, the supplier declared bankruptcy in October, creating a survival plan to help it move into the new year.

JOE HALEY is a product editor; **THERESA HEGEL** is a senior staff writer; **SARA LAVENDUSKI** is an assistant editor; **NICOLE ROLLENDER** is editor; **ALEXANDRA STEEL** and **CHUCK ZAK** are contributing writers to *Stitches*.

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The POWER POLL

Power 75 members give their views on everything from industry trends to travel to technology.

COMPILED BY THERESA HEGEL RESEARCH: NATHANIEL KUCSMA, DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, ASI



“IT’S AN ELECTION YEAR,
which means more promotional business. The government will be a little more level for fear of making a move that would affect the election outcome.”

• Scott Fresener, T-Biz Network International LLC

WHAT’S YOUR OUTLOOK FOR THE INDUSTRY IN 2016?



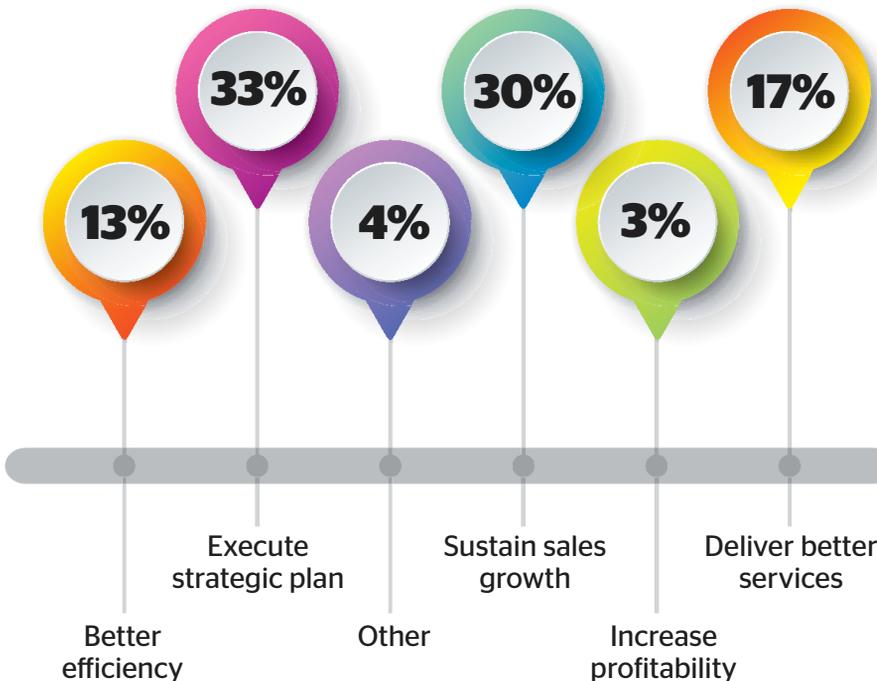
91% POSITIVE



9% UNCERTAIN

What's your number-one goal for your company in 2016?

One-third of the Power 75 will be executing a strategic plan next year, with another 30% listing sustained sales growth as their number-one personal goal for 2016.



“We’re moving ever closer to a society that expects everything to be customizable and personal. Decoration has a key role to play in that, and we can capitalize on the design-heavy, savvy market that’s emerging.”

Erich Campbell, Black Duck Embroidery and Screen Printing (asi/700415)

“With faceless online website sourcing, companies need to firmly entrench their value proposition in the minds of their customers. The more your customers see you as a partner to their success and less of a commodity, the stronger your relationship can become, which will diminish pricing pressure.”



Marshall Atkinson, Visual Impressions

“The economy is now a neutral factor. It's up to businesses to pull out big ideas, and everyone has a good chance at success.”

Niamh O'Connor, Urban Threads

“Embroidery is more visible than ever. In past years, our primary customer category was small businesses, but now many more individuals are buying and wearing custom embroidery.”



Deborah Hurd, My Embroidery Mentor

What do customers want from decorators?

Three-quarters of Power 75 members agree that **customers shop primarily on price.** That's a sharp increase from 2014's power poll, when a little less than half of respondents agreed with the same statement.

- Nearly all agree that clients actively seek additional services from decorators.
- About two in three agree that clients believe it's important to justify ROI.



“There are more smartphones than toilets in the world.”

Randy Carr, World Emblem International (asi/98264)

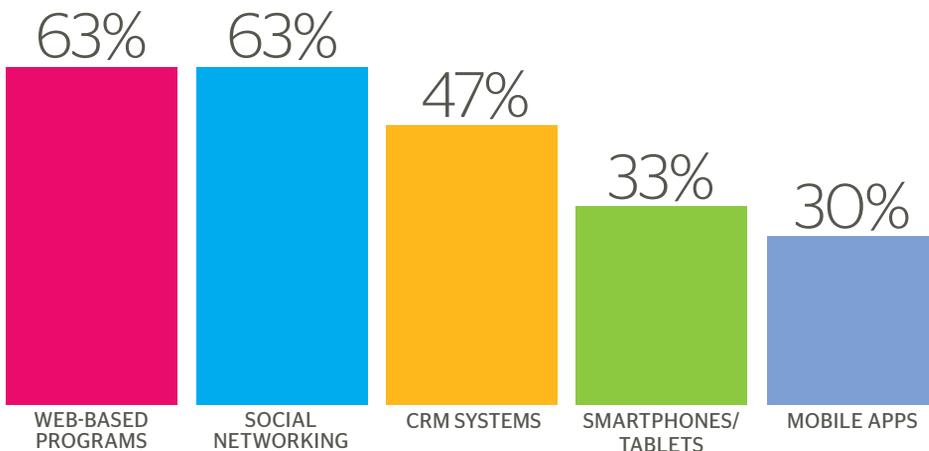
What will decorators' biggest challenges be in 2016?

More than eight in 10 Power 75 members strongly believe **improving value to customers** should be the top priority next year.



What technology will be most important to businesses in the decorated-apparel market in 2016?

Though Web-based programs and social networking are tied as the most important technology for the industry, customer relationship management (CRM) systems made a dramatic leap in importance, compared to last year, when only 10% of respondents ranked them as important.



Note: Decorators could select up to three responses.

“Online adaptability is going to be a key indicator of success.

If a potential customer cannot find you and be convinced to choose you from your online presence, you may as well not exist.”

Jennifer Cox, NNEP (asi/187622)

“My number-one goal is better efficiency in 2016. The challenge is to hire good talent while maintaining the company bottom line.”

Jay Malanga, ShopWorks

FINISH THIS SENTENCE ...

In five years, social media will be ...

“... as common and integral as electricity or running water.”

Erich Campbell, Black Duck Embroidery and Screen Printing

“... integrated into the machines we sell.”

Paul Ashworth, BERNINA of America

“... not as important to B2B businesses as everyone thought.”

Jay Malanga, ShopWorks

“... ridiculous.”

Jeff Clark, Berne Apparel

“... the norm.”

Brenden Prazner, DecoNetwork

“... somewhat useful for smaller and smaller segments of the market.”

Daniel Fucci, Sierra Technology Group

“... making my head spin.”

Randi Blumenthal-Joseph, Penn Emblem Co. (asi/77120)

“... the number-one marketing tool for years to come because we see steady growth every year.”

Shirley Clark, Madeira USA

“... mainstream and one more tried-and-true marketing outlet, but companies who still embrace good, old-fashioned selling and knocking on doors will still win out in the end.”

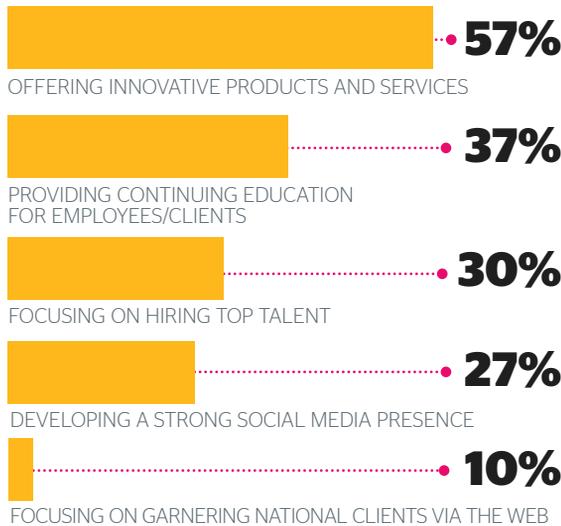
Scott Fresener, T-Biz Network International LLC

“... the go-to medium for approval before purchasing any type of product or service.”

Joyce Jagger, The Embroidery Coach

What do you think will make decorating firms most successful in 2016?

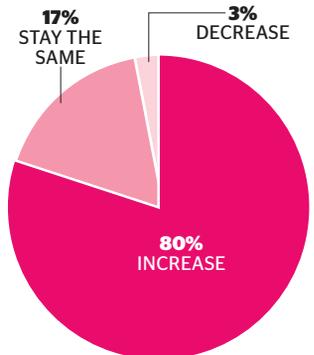
Offering innovative products and services, and providing continuing education are the top two ways Power 75 members believe decorating firms will find success next year. Almost one-third of respondents highlighted the need to hire top talent, a significant increase from last year's 17%.



Note: Multiple responses were accepted.

IN THE DECORATED-APPAREL INDUSTRY, HOW WILL SOCIAL MEDIA'S USE AS AN EFFECTIVE MARKETING TOOL CHANGE IN 2016?

Four out of five Power 75 members believe social media's marketing relevance will increase. Last year, 83% said its importance would grow.



“The industry will need to start looking more toward an Amazon-type business model.”

Ira Neaman, Vantage Apparel (asi/93390)

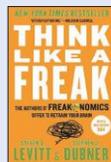


“Decorating firms need to provide high-quality, fast and efficient service and reliability.”

Rick Cesere, Edwards Garment Co. (asi/51752)

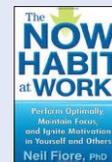
THE POWER 75 Book List

Read one of these titles recommended by Power 75 members to gain business insight and inspiration.



Think Like a Freak: The Authors of Freakonomics Offer to Retrain Your Brain
by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner

Recommended by: Deborah Hurd, My Embroidery Mentor



The Now Habit at Work: Perform Optimally, Maintain Focus, and Ignite Motivation in Yourself and Others
by Neil Fiore

Recommended by: Erich Campbell, Black Duck Embroidery and Screen Printing



The E-Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It
by Michael E. Gerber

Recommended by: Jay Malanga, ShopWorks

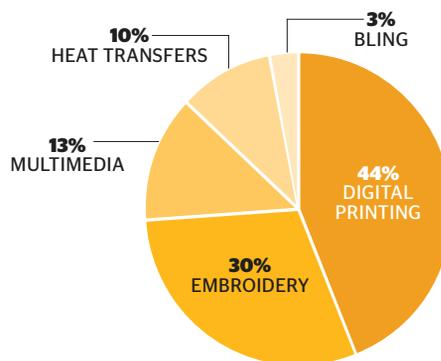


“In this age of consumer choice, improving value to customers will be the biggest challenge, and the answer lies in online adaptability. Customers’ expectations are rapidly changing the competitive landscape, and decorators must respond with new approaches or they will be left behind. Make it easier for your existing customers to do business with you, or they’ll go elsewhere. You can no longer assume your longtime customers will remain loyal.”

Martin Kristiaman, DecoNetwork

WHICH DECORATION METHOD WILL BE MOST POPULAR WITH END-BUYERS IN 2016?

Though digital printing is expected to be the most popular decoration method in 2016, Power 75 members are slightly less enthusiastic about it (44%) than they were when asked the same question in last year’s Power Poll (48%).



“Social media is used so extensively that businesses need to use it if they want to stay on top.”

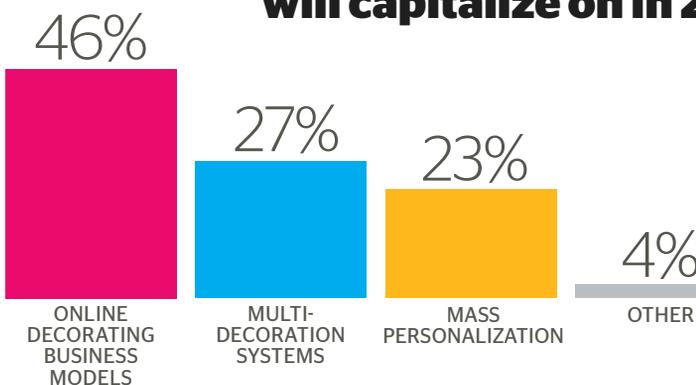
Jesse Mack, HoopMaster/
Midwest Products Inc.



“If you don’t continually improve your value, someone else is going to improve theirs, and your business will suffer greatly.”

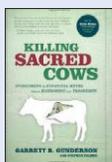
Joyce Jagger,
The Embroidery Coach

Which trend do you think decorators will capitalize on in 2016?



Nearly half of Power 75 members believe **online decorating business models will be the trend most decorators are likely to capitalize on in 2016.**

About one-quarter each believes mass personalization and multi-decoration systems are the top trends.



Killing Sacred Cows: Overcoming the Financial Myths That Are Destroying Your Prosperity

by Garrett B. Gunderson and Stephen Palmer

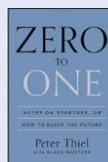
Recommended by: Joyce Jagger,
The Embroidery Coach



Creativity, Inc.: Overcoming the Unseen Forces That Stand in the Way of True Inspiration

by Ed Catmull and Amy Wallace

Recommended by: Marshall Atkinson,
Visual Impressions



Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future

by Peter Thiel and Blake Masters

Recommended by: Randy Carr and Martin Kristiaman



Becoming Steve Jobs: The Evolution of a Reckless Upstart into a Visionary Leader

by Brent Schlender and Rick Tetzeli

Recommended by: Scott Fresener,
T-Biz Network International LLC

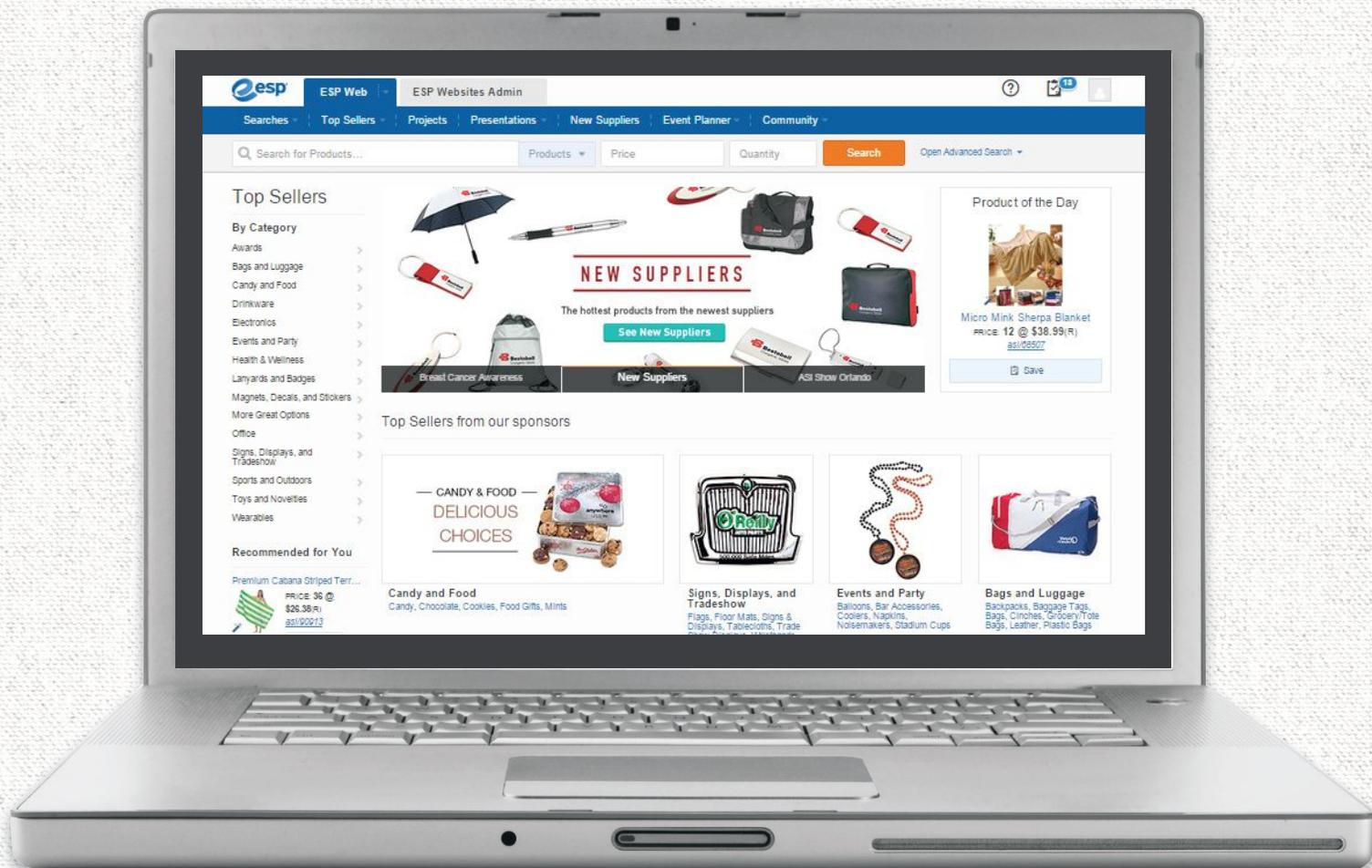


Ninja Innovation: The Ten Killer Strategies of the World’s Most Successful Businesses

by Gary Shapiro

Recommended by: Rick Cesere,
Edwards Garment Co.

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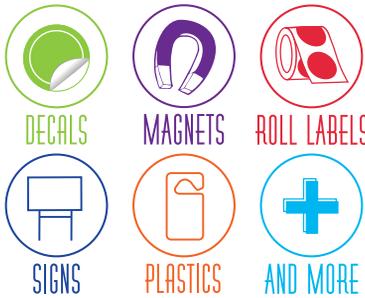
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alphabroder - asi/34063	4	9	Jerzees	30	29
American & Efid	16	8	Next Level Apparel - asi/73867	10	1
Bc Supply Co	21	61	Pacific Sportswear & Emblems	25	61
Berne Apparel - asi/40260	5	CV1	Psi NI Der Reed Exhibitions	20	24
Berne Apparel - asi/40260	6	5	STAHL'S - asi/88984	11	10
Bito	22	62	Stouse Inc - asi/89910	12	61
Bodek and Rhodes - asi/40788	7	7	The Sewphisticated Stitcher & Discount Emb Blanks - asi/323872	14	CV3
Chl Inc	27	61	Transfer Express - asi/91804	13	62
Djs Labels Inc	29	62	Wilcom America	28	11
Epson America, Inc.	31	3			
Express Digitizing.com - asi/700145	18	61			
Express Digitizing.com - asi/700145	19	61			
Freehand Graphics Inc.	17	62			
Fruit of the Loom	26	CV4			
Gildan Activewear SRL - asi/56842	8	13			

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COMPANY	RSN	PAGE#
AdvancedEMedia	83	27
Anvil Knitwear (asi/36350)	97	31
Berne Apparel (asi/40260)	78	4
Bernina of America	85	27
Brandwear (asi/41545)	79	35
Charles River Apparel (asi/44620)	91	30
Coastal Business Supplies	87	28
Dalco Athletic	89	28
Delta Apparel (asi/49172)	95	31
Hammacher Schlemmer (asi/59444)	103	33
Heritage Screen Printing (asi/700490)	98	31
Imprintables Warehouse (asi/58475)	90	28
Indigo (asi/62560)	104	34
Insta Graphic Systems	84	27
Mega Cap Inc. (asi/70434)	102	33, 35
Motion Textile (asi/72662)	94	31
Penn Emblem Co. (asi/77120)	80	25
S&S Activewear (asi/84358)	99	31
SanMar (asi/84863)	93	31
SanMar Canada (asi/84864)	107	32
Scully Leather (asi/86020)	106	34
SGIA	86	28
Sparkle Plenty Designs (asi/88442)	101	33
Stahls' (asi/91804)	88	28
The Wild Side	82	26
Trimark (asi/92121)	92	30, 32, 35
TriMountain (asi/92125)	100	32
Visual Impressions	96	31
Vitronic (asi/93990)	105	34
Windswept Marketing (asi/97248)	81	26

Stitches December 2015; Vol. 29, No. 10 (ISSN 099-5893) (USPS 2387) is published monthly, except bi-monthly in March/April and September/October, by Advertising Specialty Institute, 4800 Street Road, Trevose, PA 19053. Periodical postage paid at Langhorne, PA and at additional mailing 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 year, \$39. Outside USA and Canada, 1 year, \$59 (\$95 airmail delivery). POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Stitches*, PO Box 2197 Skokie, IL 60076.

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COMING NEXT ISSUE

What's coming up in January *Wearables*

by Nicole Rollender



The Speed Issue

It's the new normal, rush orders – the client ordered today and wants their decorated apparel yesterday. The January issue is chock-full of proven ways for decorators and distributors to speed things up efficiently and cost-effectively.



Embroidery Solutions

In this packed section, get the latest information on embroidery, art and design techniques, digitizing, machine maintenance, thread and backing innovations, new equipment and software, and more.

Plus ...

** The latest decorated-apparel trends*

** Proven growth strategies for 2016*

And much, much more!

needle watch

Needle Patrol

Our friend Slick (an embroidery machine needle) has hidden himself somewhere in this issue. He might be in an editorial photo, graphic or text – he's not in an advertisement. If you find the needle, send us a note that says, "I found the December needle on page XX," along with your name, company, address and phone number (or email address) so we can contact you if you're the winner. Mail or fax it to us at **Stitches, Attn: Needle Patrol**, 4800 Street Rd., Trevose, PA 19053; fax: (215) 953-3107. Also, tell us a little about your business. No phone calls please; you must respond in writing. Hurry! Responses for the December needle are due by December 31, 2015. From the correct responses, we'll randomly select one winner who'll receive a \$100 gift certificate, courtesy of Madeira USA, Laconia, NH. Please submit only one entry per drawing. We'll announce the winner in the February 2016 issue of *Wearables*.



Slick Closes Out 2015

In the September/October issue, Slick hid on page 17. **Debra Holmes** of Hampton, NC-based **Aaron's Embroidery** was chosen at random from a grand total of 17 responses. As this issue's winner, Debra Holmes will receive Madeira USA's gift certificate. Keep your eyes peeled for the industry's favorite game of hide and seek!

ASK AN EXPERT

By Erich Campbell

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next issue, you'll learn what an embroidery shop can do to become more responsive and customer focused.

Q *2015 was a pretty good year, but how can I unequivocally judge how my business fared? Also, how do the folks like you who've been in business for some time get pumped up to take on the new year? How can I get myself revved to keep improving?*

There are so many ways by which to evaluate your business. You can't boil it down to some irrefutable single metric that will prove your upward swing. That said, there are questions you can ask about key business areas to assess your progress.

Start with the numbers. Did you profit? Assuming you track your overhead, hours worked and keep your finances square (if you haven't been, that should be the first step for your 2016 ramp-up), you start with the bottom line. Have you been profitable and, if so, has that percentage of profit raised year over year? If you're starting out and haven't broken even, you can still look at trends; are you making enough per hour worked to cover your overhead? Are you trending positively that profitability is on the horizon? If you're on a measurable upswing, you've got an easy marker to judge your year and which you can aim to improve in 2016.

Take stock of your mastery. Have your skills and capabilities increased? Determine if you're a better, more capable and higher-quality decorator than you were at the beginning of 2015. Have you learned things that were useful to the daily functioning and growth of your business? Can you point to improvements to

make a positive difference in how you operate? If so, that gain in competence is a win.

Have you remained aligned with your purpose? If your business has more than profit as its main motivator, if you see your purpose as engaging in charitable outreach, being a community resource, reinvigorating a neighborhood, providing support for your employees to a certain standard, promoting a cause or helping out your industry, have you continued to adhere

customers and community?

Have you taken on high-profile clients that gained you recognition? If you can point to where you shone on a larger stage, that's a step up.

Has your business been profitable, increasingly able to take on projects, purposefully focused and more important to your community and peers in 2015? If that's a resounding yes, you can take a very, very short breath and let out a sigh of relief before you dive into 2016. This leaves the second

Share, teach and talk.

Engage with the community, whether that's your peers in the industry or your local community, being involved, helping others and joining in the larger conversation gives you more to aim for and look forward to than you'll have if you go it alone. Bring your business into a larger context; it's good for networking, and the extra input and stimulus is good for you.

Measure and evaluate more often. Take stock throughout the year. Keep track of how

“Determine if you're a better, more capable and higher-quality decorator than you were at the beginning of 2015.”

to your ideals and work toward these aims? Can you point to consistent work that proved that you've kept your larger goals in mind? When you can show you've been on-message and keeping close to your purpose, that will furnish good feelings about your year.

Measure your exposure. Have you become more well-known in your community or industry? Have you gained reputable connections that opened you to opportunities to which you didn't previously have access? Have you become known for your work, your ethics, your service? Are you the go-to person for your

half of your question: How do those of us who stay in the business stay motivated? Here's how I keep myself raring to go.

Cultivate a beginner's mindset. I remind myself there's always something new to learn and every project may offer a chance to innovate and improve. I never assume I'm a master or I know all there is to know about any aspect of the industry, even those I spend the most of my time exploring. Be a learner; learn to crave the uncomfortable space just past the edge of what you know how to handle. That's where growth happens.

you're doing on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.

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

GOT A DECORATOR DILEMMA?

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

Puzzling Over Gift Ideas?



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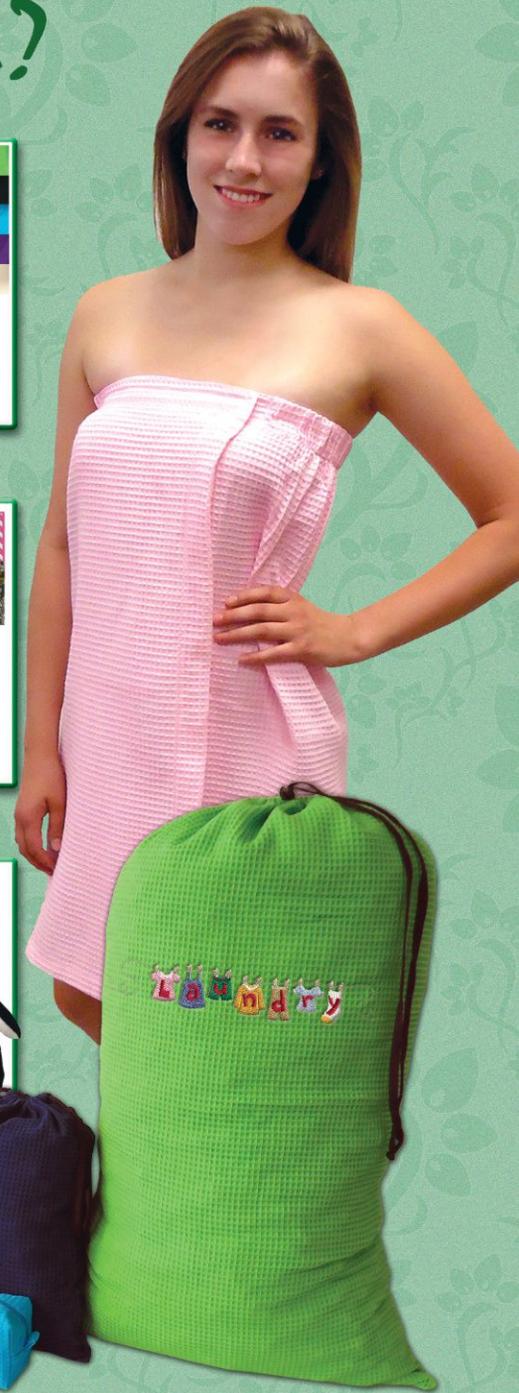
Chevron Cosmetic Bags



Acrylics & QuickStitch Paper



Holiday Items



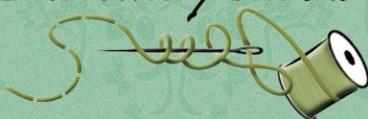
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