

May 2014

Design Express

The graphic services newsletter for promotional products pros



DECORATED APPAREL: STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

This month, *Stitches* released the results from the annual State of the Industry survey for the decorated-apparel market. In 2013, embroidery was the decorating service that generated the most revenue (64 percent), followed by screen-printing (13 percent) and digitizing/artwork services (5.8 percent). These results are similar to those of the last five years, which suggests there is stability in the industry.

Around the same time, NFIB issued [April's Small Business Optimism Index](#). Optimism has slowly increased over the past five years, and rose 1.8 points to a post-recession high of 95.2. *Stitches* survey respondents report their decorated apparel sales volume increased in 2013 (63 percent) compared to 2012 (53 percent). This is the highest amount in five years.

Our take:

The apparel decorating industry is growing at a steady pace. By partnering with Idea Custom Solutions for digitizing and artwork, businesses can maximize margins on all the decorating services they provide, while focusing their teams on complex work and personalized customer service.

[Read page 52 of the May issue of *Stitches*](#)

LEVERAGING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

"You don't have to be an industry to create an enduring business model focused on customer experience. You can be a 'company of one' and still leverage the understanding of customer experience," writes Babette Ten Haken, Founder & President of Sales Aerobics for Engineers.

Ten Haken explains the top three tips to for acquiring and retaining customers.

1. Customer Experience is Related to the

STATISTICS AND RESEARCH

ASI Central
[First quarter distributor sales were up 6.4 percent over Q1 2013 sales.](#)

PPAI
[Ninety-six percent of survey respondents \(ad agencies and advertisers\) have purchased promotional products in the past 12 months, and 74 percent consider them effective or highly effective.](#)

INDUSTRY QUOTE

Andrew Davis, marketing expert and author of *Brandscaping: Unleashing the Power of Partnerships*, recommends using 4-1-1 as a social content strategy for business. This means providing four pieces of relevant information for your audience for every one promotional message and one shared article.

"For embroiderers, that may mean finding companies creating or using interesting promotional apparel and then sharing these examples," Davis says. "After you've earned the right to showcase yourself as a resource on this subject to your social media followers, you can send out something

Length of Your Relationship. Focus on the customers you've won and make sure you support them throughout the purchase life cycle.

2. **Customer Experience is Nurtured and Grown with More Than Just Data.** Do not overload customers with data. Instead, establish your expertise and become their go-to resource for information. Ten Hanken says you should make it a goal for customers to ask, "what do you think?" versus "can you provide these services."
3. **Customer Experience is Value Creation.** What will customers say about your business? All selling activities should focus on the sustainability of customers. This puts quality of customer experience into play every day.

Customer experience incorporates the quality, quantity and perceived value of engagements a customer will have with your company over the duration of your relationship.

Our take:

An important part of customer experience is meeting expectations. With Idea Custom Solutions handling your embroidery digitizing and vector artwork, you get reliable turn times, standard pricing to eliminate surprises and quick quotes on non-standard work to ensure you deliver on promises to your customers.

[Read the rest of the article.](#)

DESIGN SHOWCASE

Vector Artwork



Input

promotional -- that's the currency you work toward."

[Read page 53 of the May issue of Stitches](#) to see more on Andrew Davis's promotional product social content strategy.

INDUSTRY NEWS

- [NNEP to Host Embroidery Trade Show in 2015](#)
- [ISS, Expo East Announces Co-Location \(page 14\)](#)
- [PPAI Introduces New App and PPB Tablet Edition](#)

UPCOMING INDUSTRY EVENTS

[ASI Show!](#)

July 15-17
Chicago, IL

[PPAI Women's Leadership Conference](#)

July 28-30
Denver, CO

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Firoj Mujawar, Team Leader

Firoj Mujawar has been working for Affinity Express for 15 years as a team leader. In this role, Firoj works on various complex embroidery designs and has grown accustomed to using



Output

Embroidery Digitizing



Input

multiple applications. Creativity drives Firoj and this is evident in the paintings and sketches he does when he has free time away from the office.

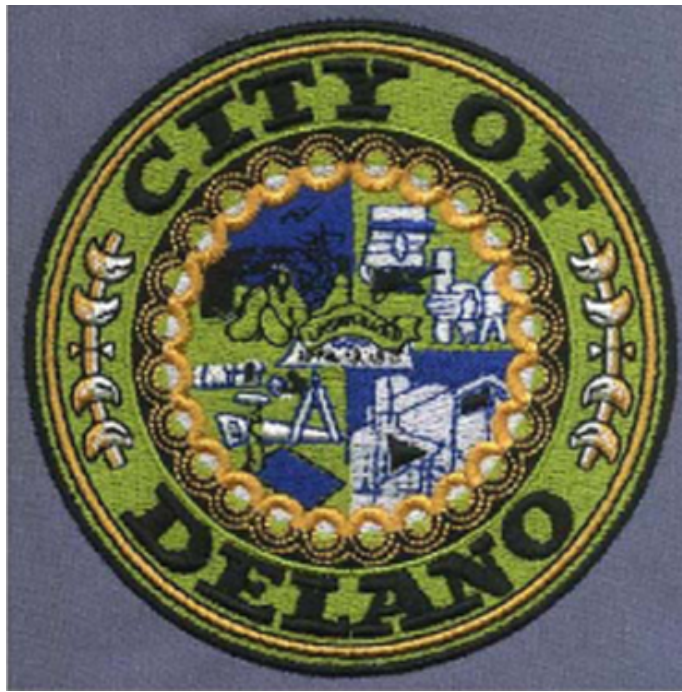
For those who know him, it is no surprise that Firoj has been charged with working on the Affinity Express annual holiday card for ten years. His talent and attention to detail have helped Affinity Express win the 2005 Great Greeting Card Contest, 2010 Golden Needle Award Design of the Year, Artistic, Corporate and the 2012 Golden Needle Award for Design of the Year, Artistic, Corporate.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is an EPS file and why do I need one instead of a JPG, TIFF or GIF?

Image files that are saved as JPG, TIFF or GIF are called bitmaps and are built using individual dots of color, also called pixels. A pixel cannot be increased or decreased in size. When you try to make an image in one of these formats smaller or larger, the software randomly creates additional pixels needed to fill the larger space, resulting in blurry, distorted images. That's why a bitmap image that looks fine as 3x1-inch graphic in a print ad will look blurry when enlarged for use in a brochure or poster.

EPS files are composed of line art ("vectors") created with simple lines, curves, and points. These lines and points are used to create shapes and objects that may be filled with color. While a pixel is saved as a fixed location on a bitmap, a vector image is saved as



Output

mathematical instructions, which makes it possible to maintain the same quality and aspect ratio when resizing. As a result, an EPS image can be sized up or down without any loss of clarity.

What is a DST file and why do I need one?

DST is an extension that indicates a file was created by a computer program that provides instructions to embroidery equipment on creating stitch decorations. Punto and Bernina by Wilcom are examples of software that can save files in the DST format.

The benefits of DST files are that they allow embroiderers to quickly stitch designs and eliminate the chances for human error when using manual processes.

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