

# DECOR ART NAVIGATION

How does a decorator turn simple artwork into stylish apparel? Follow along as an embroiderer explains the process and gives decoration tips to help you save time and money. *By Dave Vagnoni*

### Drew Coufal never planned

on being an embroiderer – after all, his college degree is in marketing and management. But, a summer job became the start of a full-time career and in 1997 Coufal took over ownership of the popular Ohio-based shop Sew &

Sew Embroidery. “We get 25 to 35 new orders every day,” he says. “We do a good amount of corporate, but we also do resort wear, some education and we work with customers that hold licenses with the NFL and NHL.”

While Sew & Sew offers clients the latest in

decorating trends, like applique, rhinestones and transfers, the shop – as its name suggests – is known for its embroidery. Here, in five basic steps, Coufal embroiders a T-shirt, offering distributors an insider’s take on what will lead to the best finished product.

#### STEP 1: ARTWORK

“Before any stitch work can be done, a decorator needs art – like a logo – from a distributor. It’s best to send decorators camera-ready art, like vector files created in Adobe or Corel. That’s because vector files can be infinitely enlarged without losing pixels, meaning the art remains crisp at any scale. While jpeg files sometimes work for embroidery, they don’t always. Here’s a tip: An easy way to tell if an art file is high-quality is to open it in a Windows browser and zoom in as far as you can. If the image appears crisp and not blurry, the file will likely be acceptable for digitizing. In the hypothetical example to the right, the image is not good enough quality for embroidery.”



#### STEP 3: DIGITIZING

“The digitized embroidery file is the single most important factor in determining how well a logo will stitch. But what exactly is digitizing? It’s a fancy term for the converting of artwork into a stitch file that can be read by an embroidery machine. When we digitize, we typically set up a base version that can be used on various items to ensure high quality. We set up this particular design in three sections to hold the registration better as the high stitch count logo sews out. It usually takes one to two business days to produce the first digital proof along with the stitch-out. Another tip: If the design scale makes the embroidery stitch count too high and expensive for the project, you can simplify most art. With just the outline of the main text and no filling, for example, we reduced the stitch count on our sample logo by 50%.”

#### STEP 2: TROUBLESHOOTING

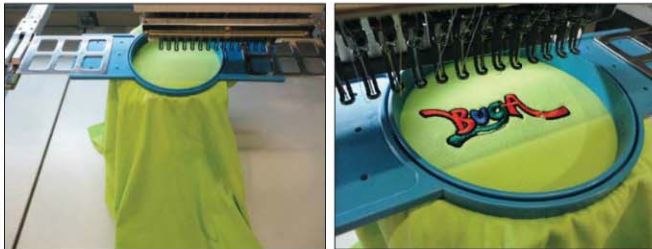
“Before any digitizing can be done, the art has to be reviewed. Because the first logo submitted wasn’t able to be reproduced, the project required better quality art. With the new art in hand, it’s now time to review the details of the order, verifying both logo size and the imprint location. With embroidery, most charges are based on the stitch count in a logo as well as the total pieces being run, so finding the right size is important to the project and budget.”



#### STEP 4: PRODUCTION

"At this point, a distributor has some proofing options to use to gain client approval. A distributor can request a digital proof of the embroidery, an actual stitch-out, or a pre-production sample.

"After approval and the arrival of merchandise, it takes, on average, five to seven business days to produce an order. In our example, several different colors of T-shirts were produced on a Barudan multi-head machine. A production tip to keep in mind: Let your decorator know on the purchase order (PO) if there are items on back-order or items that may be shipping from multiple warehouses that will arrive on different days. Also note on the PO if orders can be shipped as partials, or if they should be held until the order is complete. Bottom line: Give the decorator something to do – with deadlines – to save time."



#### STEP 5: FINISHING

"The last step is finishing. This is the time when the merchandise will be trimmed for the backing used, and any loose threads will be removed. Items will be folded, bagged or packaged according to the PO directions. This is also the final quality-control check-point. It's good to allow one to two business days to finish an order, especially if there are split shipments."



### THE FINAL PRODUCT

