

**A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO**

# COMPANY APPAREL



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# INTRODUCTION



Decorated apparel for your company is a must have for so many reasons. Uniforms create a sense of unity and make employees easily identifiable to customers. Give away t-shirts are a favorite swag item and, if designed well, spread your company name far and wide. Customers that love the products or services you offer will happily purchase cool retail items to support your business and display their pride.

Custom clothing and apparel is easy to order. It's simply a matter of deciding how to best communicate your company brand through various apparel applications. Sound complicated? Not so! This guide is designed to walk you through the various apparel and decoration options to consider and help you decide which work best for your business and brand.

## BRAND AND COMPANY APPAREL

A company's brand describes it's personality. Distinguished, reliable, fun, personable - these are all adjectives that can describe a company or company image. You can probably come up with some adjectives off the top of your head that describe your company. This personality is communicated through your company's brand, which can include your company logo, colors, and a number of other factors.

The style and type of garment, how the logo is used, colors involved, art elements and decoration technique, all contribute to what is communicated about the brand and how your message will be received when you are designing your company's apparel.

Fine dining establishments may select uniform pieces that resemble tuxedos - white button up shirt and black slacks, to embellish with the company logo. A sports bar may select a uniform that resembles a team jersey or a simple t-shirt and apron combo. Your custom apparel should be an extension of your brand and should exemplify the characteristics you want consumers to remember about your company.



# GARMENTS



You will probably want to work with your ad specialty agency to decide on the specific brand and style of apparel for your purchase based on price and availability. They are clothing experts and can help you get the style, quality, and price point you need. Of course, if you already have a brand in mind, ask for it by name.



When deciding which garments to customize, consider who will be wearing the item and what they will be doing. If your company apparel is for uniforms, consider the job position and environment in which the work is performed. For employees with physical jobs working outdoors, you may want to look into some moisture wicking or performance apparel. If your company has a casual, fun atmosphere, t-shirts may be perfect, whereas oxfords or polos may be more suited for more distinguished environments. Aprons are a must for service industry uniforms.



## SPECIAL COMPANY APPAREL ITEMS



Don't forget employee appreciation! High end items like fleece pull overs, woven shirts, or travel bags, are wonderful gifts to commemorate anniversaries and can be used as reward items for exceeding company goals or winning contests. Decorated t-shirts and caps are fun, inexpensive, and versatile ways to say, "thank you" at company picnics. You can even customize accessories for a specific event or outing, such as personalized golf towels for a golf outing.



Also remember to think about the retail items you may want to have available. Branded t-shirts are an obvious choice, and again, based on your business the retail line may consist of other items. If you are a shop that sells groceries, art supplies, or other perishables and consumables, a re-useable tote is an eco-friendly idea for repeat customers. If your business flourishes in winter seasons, retail vests, caps, and scarves may be the direction you want to go. You see where we're going with this.



Position your retail items in line with the products and or services you offer.

# DECORATION



There are three primary techniques used to customize company apparel. These processes are screen print, embroidery, and digital printing. Casual clothes ordered in large quantities may be best suited for screen printing, whereas fast turns on full color designs may call for digital print production. Embroidery communicates high quality, professionalism, and elegance.

Chances are, you've seen each of these techniques at some point. You may have in mind what you want for your company apparel, but be flexible. Each technique has a design style best suited to its process and result. You may have embroidery in mind, but if your logo will look better as a screen print, wouldn't you want to opt for the best result? That being said, each process is pretty versatile. Ad specialty representatives can help you target the ideal scenario to make sure you are not disappointed with the final product.

# BUDGET AND TIMELINE

A two-week turn around time is a safe estimate for most ad specialty agencies. Usually these companies offer rush options if you need the product sooner than their standard production time. Be aware, this can cost more and can depend on how quickly you need your order. Good ad specialty agencies will have a process in place for proofing new custom orders. If possible, leave a couple of extra days for this. There are many steps involved when producing a custom decoration order and on occasion complications occur. If you're order is related to an event, leave as much time as possible for production.

Have an idea of what you have to spend. An ad specialty representative will help align your product, decoration, timeline and budget. Volume discounts are applied based on how many you order, so you may end up ordering more than you need at the onset to save money in the long run. It's always a good idea to have extra pieces to easily pull off the shelf, than to pay more for multiple small orders.

# HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT AD SPECIALTY AGENCY



Many ad specialty agencies offer services beyond customizing apparel and products. You can have your promotional products tagged, folded and bagged according to your preferences. If you have a high rate of re-ordering, you may want your ad specialty agency to produce an excess for stock in their warehouse. Decorated uniforms and promotional items can be pulled from the shelf and distributed how, where, and when you want. Be sure to inquire about fulfillment options when you are shopping for a company to partner with for custom apparel, uniforms and more.

High tech ad specialty agencies can create custom purchasing websites with your company's personalized logo, to make it even easier for managers, employees, and customers to place custom orders on their own with your company's logo. Large ad specialty agencies with a strong professional track record specialize in unique services such as Pantone matching, brand identity, and producing fast spec samples. Most businesses don't have artists on staff, so working with a company that provides art and design services can give you custom apparel an even sharper edge.

Not all ad specialty agencies offer these services, and reliable one-stop shops are few and far between. Even if you have all your needs covered, make sure to ask about other services your ad specialty agency can provide. Leave all the details of custom clothing, decoration, and fulfillment to the experts, and get on with your real business at hand. Below is a list of common fulfillment services you may want to inquire about:

- folding and bagging
- tagging and hang tagging
- stickering and bar coding
- special pack outs
- pick, pack, and ship
- distribution options
- custom web stores
- auto-replenishing

# CONCLUSION

Company custom clothing can benefit your business in so many ways. There is no reason to limit your business to the advantages of a uniform program. Before you approach an ad specialty agency, have an idea of what you would like, but be flexible. Promotional product experts can help you coordinate your ideal product with your budget and timeline. By interviewing different companies, you may be able to get a lot more than you might have expected, which can make the ordering of company apparel fast and easy.

