

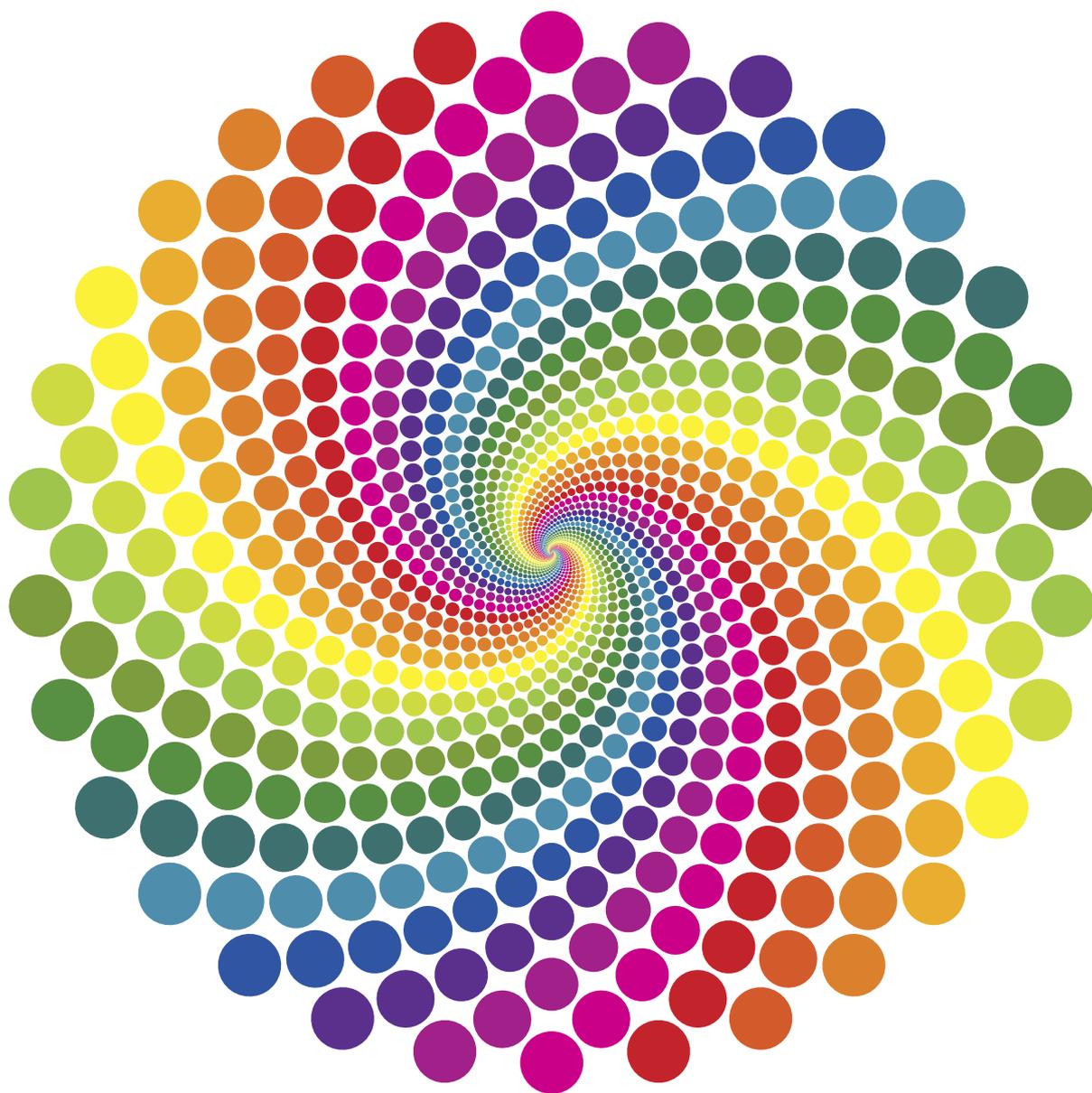
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MAKING HEAT PRINTING EASIER

Ulrike André outlines how the right accessories can save time and money

So you have the perfect heat press, cutter, and direct-to-garment printer? You have studied all there is to know about the many heat-printing materials – films, flocks, bling and other special effect vinyls? You have researched digital media? You are eager to get started and produce the most amazing personalised textiles the world has ever seen – only to discover this is not as easy as you thought it would be.

Heat printing actually is still the fastest, easiest way to decorate just about any garment, but as is true with so many things in life – P6 = Proper, Prior, Preparation, Prevents Poor Performance!

A colleague of mine coined this ‘formula’ during a webinar last year and it sums it up perfectly. Know what you need to know before you start and you’ll save yourself a lot of headaches, not to mention hard earned cash.

Here is a summary of “I wish I would have known this before” about the usefulness of heat printing accessories. You’ll find that the right accessory can make your heat printing job so much more efficient, and maybe even a little more fun.

CHANGE IT UP – GETTING THE RIGHT FINISH

One of the most versatile and inexpensive accessories that everyone should own is a cover sheet.

Our kraft paper is a brown, treated paper that prevents any dyes or residue from getting onto the upper platen/heating element or garment during application. Kraft paper is most commonly used with CAD-CUT material since it also reduces the amount of static that can generate between the Mylar carrier and heating element. In addition, you can use it to impart a matte finish on certain types of heat transfer material, which is often requested by

the customer. It is reusable but must be replaced when it becomes dirty or wrinkled.

Another popular cover sheet is the more durable, reusable, non-stick cover sheet, which also prevents any dyes or residue from getting onto the upper platen/heating element or garment during application. A coated cover-sheet is often the most popular because it is durable and can be easily cleaned with a damp cloth. It leaves a smooth semi-gloss finish on certain types of heat transfer materials.

One of the biggest ‘secrets’ in the world of heat printing is what is known as The Flexible Application Pad. This thin, silicone, rubber-like textured pad protects items such as zippers, buttons, and snaps from coming in direct contact with the heating element. Because it is made of rubber silicone, it can help prevent such fasteners from melting if they cannot be avoided during heat application. The Flexible Application Pad will also leave a slight texture that resembles a screen-print finish on certain materials. The Flexible Application Pad is also a great way to avoid heat press marks on polyester garments that are more sensitive to heat.

GETTING TRICKY JOBS DONE RIGHT

You may find you need a pad or pillow to enable proper application on uneven items. Coated pillows help prevent marks on transfers heat applied near heavy seams, buttons, and zippers. The pillow allows for an even surface and consistent temperature and pressure throughout the transfer. Coated pillows are available in many popular sizes and are easy to use: simply insert the pillow, adjust the pressure and apply heat for successful results.

Print perfect pads are also designed to elevate the print area on the garment so you can avoid items that can cause uneven

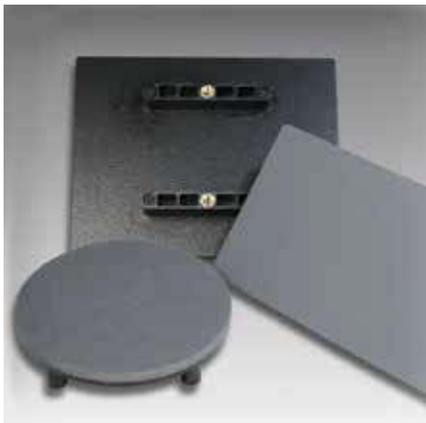
pressure, like metal zippers and heavy seams. These silicone rubber-like pads come in different sizes to accommodate the most commonly decorated areas. Use a print perfect pad to achieve perfect pressure throughout the heat application, every time.

PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT – OPTIMISING HEAT PRESS PERFORMANCE

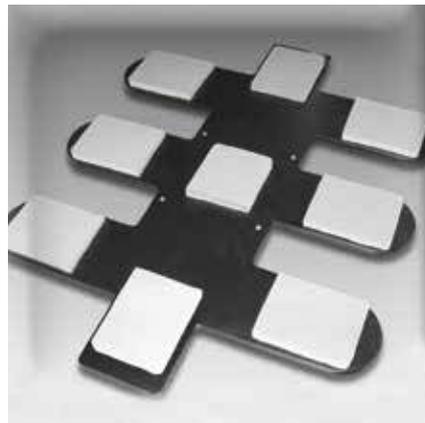
Here are some more accessories you should know about that will not only increase your efficiency, they will also protect your heat press. The quick slip lower platen protectors fit snugly over the lower platen while providing several benefits. When heat printing, you can quickly and easily slide any apparel on and off your heat press. It doubles as a protector for the rubber pad on the lower platen, reducing its wear and tear, and prolonging the life of your bottom platen. The quick slip lower platen protector also helps retain heat, promoting a more even flow of adhesive during the printing process.

The non-stick upper platen protector prevents ink and lint build-up on the upper platen and is especially useful when curing inks on DTG textiles. Use this cover in addition to the quick slip lower platen protector for an even smoother operation process. This protector helps eliminate residue from inks, adhesives, and lint from the upper platen.

Accurate temperature is essential for a perfect print every time. If your temperature is too low when applying heat transfer materials, the adhesive on the material may not activate. Too high a temperature can cause adhesive to squeeze out and leave an outline around the graphic. A test kit can help you to prevent both problems; the strips are designed to check the temperature accuracy of your heat press.



There are platens to accommodate any size textile



Custom platens are able to take on any job



Upper and lower platen covers enhance heat press life



A heat press caddie can save up to 40% production time

HEAT PRINT ANYTHING – HOW TO WORK WITH NON-GARMENT ITEMS

Your customers want more than just T-shirts printed. If you can fit it under your press, you can customise it. That includes shoes, gloves, bags and more. We are in the personalisation industry – it's what we do. It is inevitable that you will get requests to print odd shaped items. Why not use it to your advantage and be known as the decorator who can do it all, no matter how unique the request, while still remaining profitable?

Depending on the item you wish to print, a different sized lower platen can make a big difference.

- Custom Interchangeable Platen. You will be pleasantly surprised just how affordable these platens can be and even more surprised at just how efficient they will make your work. Gloves, shoes ... no need to pinch, shove and pull them awkwardly over the lower platen if you can have a custom platen built.
- Standard Interchangeable Platen. Almost every heat press manufacturer offers them but most users do not think about investing



An assortment of cover sheets and pads

the extra money to purchase them. Just as the custom interchangeable platens, these might be one of the greatest investments you can make for your heat press. By simply purchasing a smaller platen you make heat applying onto children's clothing much easier, smaller bags are no problem and awkward promotional goods are easy. And if the heat press is equipped with a quick release/rotation function your lower platen just turned into a 'buy one get one free' platen – change the direction of the platen in order to accommodate the item at hand.

INCREASE OUTPUT – THE ULTIMATE ACCESSORY

Chances are that your heat press arrived in a box. Once you unpack it you have to find counter space in your shop or production area to accommodate it. Depending on the type and platen size, this can seriously cramp your style and take away valuable counter space. If you want to reclaim your counter space you can purchase a heat press caddie stand.

You simply place your heat press on top of the caddie and move it to where you need it when you need it there. Furthermore, as it is the case of the Hotronix caddie stand and table top version, you can turn your heat press into a 'threadable' heat press. The space below the lower platen stands free and you are able to spin what ever you are decorating freely on the lower platen – saving a lot of time dressing, removing and re-dressing the platen to complete the heat application of a textile that requires the front and back to be decorated.

SPEND (SOME) TIME – SAVE (A LOT OF) TIME

Granted, it gets easier with experience, however many mistakes and mishaps can be averted from the get-go if only one knows where to look and what to look for.

I could not begin to list how many questions we are asked when exhibiting at a show about how to ease the heat printing application process. And more often than not, there is an easy fix. I encourage you to pick up the phone, or send an email and describe your query to the authorised dealer/distributor or heat printing manufacturer directly.

The chances are we have a sound, easy, affordable solution for your problem. ■

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