

In The News....

BEING IN YOUR FACE IS MORE THAN
JUST A TURN OF PHRASE

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IDEAS IN ACTION

FOR **DOUG STAYMAN**, BEING IN YOUR FACE IS MORE THAN JUST A
TURN OF PHRASE

Dressing for success

BY SANDRA ZARAGOZA | STAFF WRITER

Carrollton-based In Your Face Apparel, a 3-year-old venture in the promotional apparel business, is in the business of getting corporate clients noticed.

The company makes and sells fashionable, "blinged-out" clothing items and custom apparel nationally to big names like Bud Light, Hooters, Mercedes Benz and Hawaiian Tropic, as well as to local businesses, schools and other groups. Beyond regular customization, the company also has a program that puts a client's name directly on a garment's label.

In Your Face founder and owner Doug Stayman says that getting his company noticed by the right people — in this case the independent promotional products distributors that sell the items to corporate America — hasn't been simple.

In a market that relies more on proven staples than innovation, In Your Face is something of a maverick in terms of its styles and use of a decoration called crystal transfer, an embellishment that layers hundreds of tiny

"crystals" over a print or logo, visually pumping up its depth and dimension. In Your Face has an exclusive agreement with the company that invented the crystal transfer process. Stayman declined to disclose the name of the company.

"The challenge we have in the promotional market is that it's a 'me-too' industry," Stayman said. "A pen is a pen and a mug is a mug — they don't have to explain what it is."

In Your Face is providing something quite different.

Trendy lines

In 2003, Stayman set out to fill a demand for garments that are as trendy as anything purchased at the mall.

"What is hot in retail is not readily available from promotional-product suppliers," he said. "We saw there was a gap in the promotional market and in what the supplier could do for the customer. We are retail in style, in fabric and in decorating."

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apparel.**

**What you want,
when you want it.**

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DRESSING: *Big challenges*

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The company's trendy product offerings have led to fast-rising sales. So far this year, sales are up 578% from last year and orders have gone from 10 a month to hundreds. This year the company expects to generate north of \$3 million in revenue, up from \$2 million in 2005.

Stayman says the embellished styles generally appeal more to women — about 90% of the company's sales are women's garments.

The company offers traditional shirt decorations including rhinestones, studs and sequins, as well as glittery and woven shirt transfers. In Your Face also can provide watermation, a water-based ink printing process that can give shirts a vintage look.

But it is the company's crystal transfer option that really makes it stand out from the competition.

Nonetheless, communicating the unique look and durability of crystal transfer to distributors has been a big challenge, Stayman said. Crystal transfer accounts for 10% to 20% of total sales, he added.

New concept

"It's a new concept," he said. "The crystal transfer has a durability factor that's less than embroidery but more than silk screening."

To solve the marketing problem, Stayman and his team began advertising in trade publications and added e-mail blasts to 60,000 salespeople and customers.

In one blast, they inserted a Web link to a "virtual shirt-builder" on their Web site that lets customers tailor designs and styles. That day, the company logged 1,700% more Web site hits than usual.

"The message has to keep coming through. It's really consumer building and branding, and it takes time for people to remember you. You have to be in front of them, so that they'll think of you for these products," Stayman said.

Jim Piko, of Blue Island, Ill.-based Marathon Sportswear, buys women's T-shirts and appliques from In Your Face. He says he values the company's focus and size, which allows it to be nimble.

"They zero in on certain products and certain styles," Piko said. "And there is a quick turnaround in how fast you can get things."

In the upcoming months, Stayman says the company is planning to launch a more extensive range of styles, focus on partnerships with suppliers and, of course, stay in its customers' faces.