

# DESIGN EXPRESS

The graphic services newsletter for promotional products pros



February 2018

## HOW PROMO PRODUCTS COMPANIES ARE WINNING THE WINTER OLYMPICS

The 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games may be wrapping up, but for some promotional products companies, the benefits will be felt for months. This season's competition, as is common with the games, has led to a boost in Olympics-branded merchandise sales.



Staples Promotional Products, one of ASI's Top 40 distributors, told *Counselor* it's been a banner year for the swag; the company has sold branded merch to several major clients including Visa, Coca-Cola and United Airlines. In particular, Toyota has been a huge partner for Staples, selling co-branded Olympics and Toyota gear including key fobs, lapel pins and apparel.

"Toyota has been very engaged with TV ads and the athletes they are sponsoring, which has also led to significant merchandise sales," Rich Witaszak, vice president and general manager of Staples Promotional Products, told *Counselor*.

Sports retailer Fanatics has seen a significant boost in Nike and Team USA branded gear too, especially with jackets. The company handled merchandising for the U.S. Olympics Committee and told Reuters it sold thousands of the Team USA jackets since the beginning of the Games, but the snowboarding competitions jumpstarted a whole new level of sales. When Chloe Kim and Shaun White both secured their gold medals, fans scrambled to get the same apparel the snowboarders were wearing: \$800 spacesuit-inspired Burton jackets that are now out of stock.

"As soon as White's performance happened on the half pipe, we saw the immediate demand come in for snowboarding," co-president of Fanatics direct-to-consumer business Jack Boyle told Reuters.

## QUICK NEWSLETTER SURVEY



## INFOGRAPHICS THAT CAN HELP YOUR BUSINESS



Every month, Idea Custom Solutions publishes original infographics that we design to inform and educate industry professionals. Here are a couple of our most popular. Be sure to check out the [Insights section of our website](#), under Resources, for more of these tools.



Under Insights, we also archive

Compared to 2014's Sochi Games, sales numbers show a huge 80 percent boost overall in branded merchandise this year. Fanatics attributes it to a larger selection of goods available that have been approved by the U.S. Olympics Committee.

One of the top selling Olympics-branded promotional items? A \$45 brass Team USA Cheering Cowbell. Because even in the Winter Games, there's always room for more cowbell. A \$90 one-piece branded pajama has also emerged as a top Olympics seller; it made an appearance on the Today show and, as a result, Fanatics has had to reorder batches of the garment four times.

One category doesn't do so well in the booming Winter Olympics sales landscape, though: footwear. According to *Footwear News*, it's for a mix of reasons. Although the Olympics push a lot of fans into a pattern of being more active, that doesn't necessarily happen during the Winter Games — mainly because it's either cold out or you're in a location that doesn't have winter sports capabilities or facilities. That reality plus the fact that the shoes aren't practical for consumers to wear equals less demand.

"None of the sports in the Winter Games feature footwear that consumers wear, so there is really no leverage point," Matt Powell, senior industry advisor of sports at The NPD Group, told *Footwear News*. "Athletes that compete in the Olympics [do so] at such an elite level that the average armchair athlete does not even compare themselves."

If you want to get in on the Olympics merchandise craze for the next set of competitions, [check the rules for selling Games-branded items](#) and then call [Idea Custom Solutions](#) to help you with the vector artwork and embroidery digitizing to make your customers stand out and compete!

## EMBRACING EMBROIDERY TRENDS OF 2018

In January, Laura Gomez — a content specialist with Ricoma Embroidery Machines — called out [a few embroidery trends she saw in 2017 that she expects to last](#) throughout this year: embroidery on denim, embroidered baseball caps and Instagram-ready embroidered sun hats for women.

She seems to be on point. Embroidery is still listed as a top popular trend for fashion around the world and it doesn't appear to be going anywhere soon. The intricate stitching is showing up everywhere from haute couture outfits and wedding dresses to, as Gomez said, floppy hats and fringed denim. [Embroidery even made an appearance on footwear at Paris Fashion Week.](#)

But today's embroidery isn't the same old, same old floral pattern it used to be. [Designs are getting a bit funky this year](#), with these new styles highlighted by both *Textile Network* and embroidery consultant [Reiner Knochel](#).

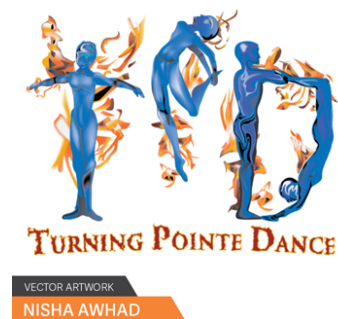
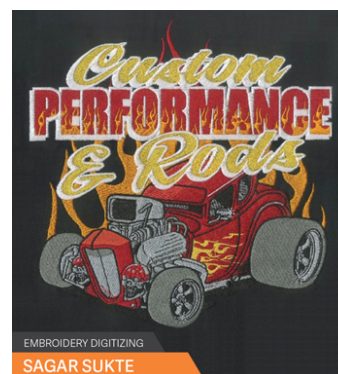
- **Shapes and Structures.** Embroidery doesn't have to be flat anymore. New trends in the upcoming seasons will include thread embroidered over firm materials to create designs that pop or maintain their shape while in use or thread effects that give the illusion of 3D design.

[past issues of this newsletter.](#)

Feel free to contact us to request we cover any subjects that would help your business:  
[marketing@ideacustom.com](mailto:marketing@ideacustom.com).

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR TEAM

Every month, we celebrate the designers whose work scores the highest impressions on Instagram. This time, **Sagar Sukte** won for embroidery digitizing and **Nisha Awhad** won for vector artwork. Keep up the great work, team!



## NOTABLE QUOTES



"Do not be embarrassed by your failures, learn from them and start again."

— Richard Branson

- **Imperfection.** Color outside the lines. Let one unusual color meander through an embroidered design. Tear fabric apart and roughly stitch it back together. These new trends prove that what used to be called mistakes are now becoming perfectly imperfect.
- **Personal Creations.** Free embroidery creates an entire new design on fabrics that mixes creative stitching with contrasting colors, resulting in a riotous concoction of style and hue that exists nowhere else in the world.
- **Experimental Edges.** Embroidery stitching around the edges of garments, blankets or other fabric items is taking on new life this year with effect-based threads — like ones that reflect or glow in the dark.
- **Unusual Combinations.** No combination of fabric and thread is off-limits this year. New mixtures are popping across the design world, like puffy and thick fabric meant to look even puffier when it's tightly embroidered on. Go crazy here: metallic thread on matte fabric, fuzzy fabric with neon thread . . . the possibilities are endless.
- **Nature.** Embroidery is continuing to promote a healthy Earth this year with natural fabrics like linen and hemp, embroidered with natural cotton thread. Some designs are trending back to floral as well, but modern, updated motifs with multiple dimensions.
- **Tech Inspiration.** Cutout fabric and embroidery thread can create all sorts of unique designs. Some of the new trends have stitching that looks like an electronic network, grid or web, all with multiple layers so eyes catch different parts of the designs with every glance.

Want to include embroidery as a feature on some of your products this year? Look past the standard hats, t-shirts and patches and put customers' embroidered logos on products that match this year's trends. Think ties, book covers, jewelry, headbands, even ornaments.

Offer your customers something truly special and original — and let Idea Custom Solutions help. With our [embroidery digitizing services](#), we convert your artwork or your customers' artwork into detailed, beautiful designs to stitch on the products they orders. That is, assuming they want to keep up with the fashion world!

## 5 DOs AND DON'Ts OF BRANDING FOR SMALL BUSINESSES



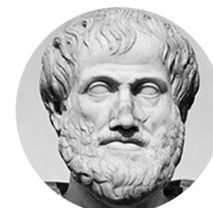
"If **leadership is the way forward**, vision is its walking stick."

— Nkem Paul



"You are not your resume, **you are your work.**"

— Seth Godin



"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is **not an act, but a habit.**"

— Aristotle



"Whether you think you can, or think you can't — **you're right.**"

— Henry Ford



"The only place where **success comes before work** is in the dictionary."

— Vidal Sassoon





Branding: it's not just for high-profile businesses. The definition of branding is “the marketing practice of creating a name, symbol or design that identifies and differentiates a product from other products.” As a small business, you can have great products, services and employees but still struggle. The problem could be that your brand isn't buttoned up. Here are a few dos and don'ts for mastering the art of branding.

1. **DON'T believe your small business can do without it.** Small businesses are jumping on the brand bandwagon these days and it's becoming increasingly important, as consumers are savvier than ever. Consumers look at more than just storefronts. They see logos, websites, packaging and promotional materials. All these elements contribute to the brands of small businesses and set them apart from others competing for the same consumer dollars.
2. **DO establish brand guidelines.** The items *Entrepreneur* says falls within brand guidelines are the logo (both an overarching logo and any logo lockups your company uses for individual product lines), brand colors, taglines, fonts and typography, “voice” used in your branded materials, imagery, mascots and spokespeople. Dismissing brand guidelines for your company or your clients' businesses will undermine the consistency and direction needed for success.
3. **DON'T overcomplicate the logo.** When building brand identities, the temptation is strong to add more to logos than what is truly needed. Say no to using a rainbow of colors and eight different fonts. Check out the multiple logos the Coca-Cola company went through before settling on its simple, iconic script. For more tips on creating a logo, read our post for the “4 Rules to Designing a Great Logo”.
4. **DO hire professionals.** Hire a brand manager and don't leave your logo and typeface to amateur designers. By hiring the right people, you are laying the foundation for a strong brand for you or your customers' businesses.
5. **DON'T use the wrong message** (with the wrong voice to the wrong audience). Although you don't have to use all three at once, the incorrect message, voice or audience alone are deadly to your business if not correctly defined. You should also be looking ahead and anticipating what your audience wants to hear. Matt Hillman, a creative director and guest contributor to *B2B Marketing*, advises “. . . you need to be continually surveying your



“With a strong personal brand, you become the only option in the eyes of your ideal customer.”

— Amber Hurdle



“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself, any direction you choose.”

— Dr. Seuss



“Risk more than others think is safe. Dream more than others think is practical.”

— Howard Schultz



“All progress takes place outside the comfort zone.”

— Michael John Bobak

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

customers — and your prospects! — for the fresh insights needed to build a message that's relevant today, not just yesterday.”

Idea Custom Solutions is ready to help you and your clients define brands for business. With great quality and the most reliable turn times for custom logo design, you can count on Idea Custom Solutions to help you get brands up-to-speed and on target!

## GET FAMILIAR WITH 2018's MARKETING DESIGN TRENDS

Every year, billions of customers search Shutterstock's database of 170 million images, videos and music, often hunting for something to be used in the film, media and advertising industries. When those searches get analyzed — say by a team of data scientists, content reviewers, and creative professionals — we're left with a wealth of data showing what designs are trending and exploring what we'll get used to seeing in the marketing design world throughout the following year.

“The data gathered over the past year across images, videos and music helped to determine the standout ideas and concepts that we believe will influence creative direction and design aesthetics in 2018,” Shutterstock said.

Those results all come together in Shutterstock's annual “Creative Trends Report”, and 2018's was just released. Here's what we can look forward to.

- **Top Trend: Fantasy.** Remember the unicorn Frappuccino craze at Starbucks not too long ago? Well that colorful splash of fantasy never left — in fact, it's only gotten bigger and brighter. The fantasy genre is expected to make a huge splash in design trends for 2018. Searches for “unicorn” in the Shutterstock database are up by 297 percent from last year. Not to be outdone, mermaids are on the rise too, by 145 percent.
- **Top Trend: New Minimalism.** Minimalism stands the test of time as a trend that always seems to be current, but now the sparse design is getting a bit of a boost from vibrant colors, neon lights and subtle but poignant textures. Searches for “continuous line” rose by 432 percent from last year and “neon circle” (note: this also a continuous line!) is up 387 percent.
- **Top Trend: Space.** The final frontier is making its way to marketing design in 2018 as Shutterstock customers reach out toward infinity. Sci-fi is slamming back onto the scene, spurring searches like “solar” (up 991 percent from last year), “astro” (a 671 percent increase), and “synthwave” (the iconic sci-fi sound, up 494 percent). Only time will tell what the searches will be when we've finally reached tourism-level space travel.
- **One to Watch: Holographic Foil.** Not that it'll be easy to turn away — shimmering colors and a bit of glitz always seem to draw the eye. Shutterstock saw searches for this term rise 435 percent over the last year, meaning we're about to see many shiny, retro, sci-fi aesthetics.
- **Surprising: Cactus.** It's about to get a lot more Southwest-chic in the design world as searches move from more traditional natural terms (think “marble” and “agate”) to include something a bit prickly: the cactus. Images here cover everything from cute



Ritu Hatte

Production Associate, Vector Artwork

For the past four and a half years, Ritu has been part of the Vector Artwork Team, creating designs and helping with quality control as needed. She tells us, “I enjoy my job and believe in team work.”

Her favorite times since joining Idea Custom Solutions have been when she gave her best performance. “I believe in trying my hardest and striving to always improve, which is key to success.”

Other employees appreciate when Ritu helps them by solving design queries and explains customer requirements. Overall, she explains, “I would like to be known as a good mentor who can enhance the skill-set of team members in the company.”

About Idea Custom Solutions, Ritu says, “Our company produces the highest quality of designs in the world. I would like to tell potential employees that Idea Custom is huge ocean of knowledge where you can learn many things about design and media.”

Ritu lives with her family. When not at work, she likes to go on outings with her husband and mother. She also enjoys decorating their home. Her other hobbies include reading, listening to music and watching TV shows.

In the future, Ritu dreams of having a big bungalow and luxury cars, as well as taking trips to other countries (especially the U.S.) and learning foreign languages.

cartoon cacti to authentic photography from the desert. If you want your brand to give an “I’m a survivor” vibe, this is the way to go. Searches for “cactus” increased by 261 percent for 2018.

- **Obvious: A Global March.** Given the political landscape of the past year, it’s no wonder searches for activism-based imagery are trending. In fact, “activism” itself saw an increase of 540 percent over last year. “International Women’s Day” drew 660 percent more searches as well. There’s no sign of these searches slowing down, either — not while equality and freedom stay top of mind.

See the entire list in a fun infographic at Shutterstock’s site. In the meantime, start thinking about ways to incorporate these new trends into your customers’ promotional products and marketing materials. Idea Custom Solutions is your one-stop shop for graphic designs that play off the new trends. So, if you’re totally pumped that the Lisa Frank-esque logo you created in your spare time may suddenly be popular again, get the ball rolling with vector artwork services. **We not only recreate designs in vector format**, we can provide custom creative services to bring your ideas to life!

Here is one final international note. If you are curious what image searches are trending in other countries for this year, Japan’s keeping it simple with “pink circle,” Canada goes old-school with “vintages” and Australia’s playing a numbers game with “mathematical curve.” The U.S., inexplicably, is searching for a frog named “waxy monkey.”

## CLIENTS ARE RAVING

“Thank you so much for the vector artwork. Your team has done a great job with the request.”

**Production artist trainer**

**Major supplier of headwear, apparel and promotional products**



## DESIGN SHOWCASE

### Embroidery Digitizing



## TWEET THAT!

**#Branded #music** merchandise numbers have tripled in the past 2 years. Have you delved in yet?

<https://goo.gl/g2zXQf>

Tweet  
That!

Flashy **#logos** back on clothes in China. Could impact **#PromoProducts** if the trend comes stateside.

<https://goo.gl/TgXxJY>

Tweet  
That!

Choosing best **#embroidery** stabilizers for **#logos** makes all the difference on quality, appearance.

<https://goo.gl/rrSaHq>

Tweet  
That!

Made a **#NewYearsResolution** to better your **#SmallBiz #branding**? 5 tactics to make it a reality.

<https://goo.gl/44tQGj>

Tweet  
That!

.@nytimes readers develop **#logos** for the **#OAR** and **#Korea @Olympics** teams. What’s your fave?

<https://goo.gl/QK3dww>

Tweet  
That!

Serifs, **#retro** styles, bold design are top **#typography** trends for 2018. **#FontHappy**.

**#JustMytype**

<https://goo.gl/BRKujN>

Tweet  
That!

**#Chicago** news station confused **#Pyeongchang** with **@PFChangs** brand, so the restaurant capitalized.

<https://goo.gl/HKzxjU>

Tweet  
That!

.@Delta takes its **#brand** upscale with new employee uniforms designed by

**@Zac\_Posen**. **#fashion**

<https://goo.gl/sSkTXt>

Tweet  
That!

Follow 6 tips to make sure your **#marketing** emails are having the best impact.

**#BusinessTips**

<https://goo.gl/oCT6S1>

Tweet  
That!

Hey, **@3M**! Congrats on a 5th year of recognition for outstanding integrity/ethics.

**#PromoProducts**

<https://goo.gl/UzZCKe>

Tweet  
That!



.@BICGraphic hopes to shake up its place in [#PromoProducts](#) industry with a new “outsider” CEO. <https://goo.gl/cyJPWu>

[Tweet That!](#)

Don't miss participating in [@PPAI\\_HQ](#)'s annual sales survey. Deadline is 2-28! [#PromoProducts](#) <https://goo.gl/H4942J>

[Tweet That!](#)

If you have any designs created by our team that you would like to share in this newsletter, send them to us at [marketing@ideacustom.com](mailto:marketing@ideacustom.com)



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