

DESIGN EXPRESS

The graphic services newsletter for promotional products pros



September 2018

VANS TEAMS UP WITH VAN GOGH FOR PROMOTIONAL PERFECTION



The world of fine art is colliding with skater fashion in the newest collaboration of promotional products for the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. The collection launched August 3rd and includes shoes, some apparel and a few accessories. The products feature some of Van Gogh's most famous works: "Skull," "Almond Blossom," "Sunflowers," "Old Vineyard with Peasant Woman," "Self-Portrait as a Painter" and letters he wrote to his brother.

"It's our mission to make Van Gogh as accessible to people all over the world as we possibly can," Axel Ruger, the museum's director, told Glamour. "People from all over the world really love Van Gogh and want a piece of him, as it were. We're always looking to find new ways [to] make his work [feel] relevant today."

Adriaan Dönszelmann, the museum's managing director, agrees. He told ABC News that the partnership "brings Vincent's art 'Off The Wall' and into the world to a new audience outside the museum."

Vans, a pioneer of skater fashion, often partners with pop culture brands to create promotional lines, so this collaboration was a no-brainer. Plus, a portion of the proceeds for each sale goes to the restoration of Van Gogh's art. That's why shoppers can feel good about the steep price tag — ranging from \$40 to \$140. For the shoes specifically, the footbeds have custom art and each piece of merchandise (shoes or otherwise) comes with a hangtag touting historical tidbits about Van Gogh's work.

Here's what you can get: "Almond Blossom" high-tops (\$75), satin bomber jackets (\$140), backpacks (\$90), crew sweatshirts (\$94.50), ballcaps (\$40), "Old Vineyard with Peasant Woman" sneakers (\$75), "Sunflowers" low-tops (\$65), hoodies and t-shirts; "Skull" slip-ons (\$65),

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.



hoodies (\$99.50), long-sleeved crew shirts and ballcaps, “Self-Portrait as a Painter” low-tops (\$65), t-shirts and letters slip-ons (\$65).

Here’s the bad news, though: it’s a limited-edition collection and much of it is already sold out. There are going to be more release dates in the future, but be sure to snag what you want as soon as possible, or it will be gone forever. It’s for sale at Vans.com, Vans retail shops, the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam and the museum’s website vangoghmuseumshop.com.

Want to do a similar collaboration campaign for your clients? Work together with [Idea Custom Solutions](#) on the vector artwork and/or embroidery digitizing to create something that will shine.

WHEN IT COMES TO DIGITIZING, DIY IS DETRIMENTAL

As we get ready to start a new fiscal year, some of you may be reviewing your budget and realizing you need to trim some of the fat. With custom apparel embroidery businesses, one of the first things people suggest is moving digitizing in-house. Cut the costs of outsourcing and you save your company the money, right? Wrong. Whatever you’re saving in cost, you’ll likely end up spending more in lost time. Here’s why it’s more expensive and less productive to DIY your digitizing.

- **Time.** Let’s face it. As a business owner or employee, do you really have the time to acquire a new task? While an outside firm has the resources to take on your projects immediately, **if you decide to digitize in-house, you’ll have to cover that in addition to all your other responsibilities.** Realistically, it makes more sense to spend that time looking for new customers or finding other ways to develop your business.
- **Skill.** Assuming you aren’t a trained digitizer, **outsourcing will get you the best set of skills for the job.** This won’t be a jack-of-all-trades businessperson; it’ll be someone dedicated to the crafts of embroidery and embroidery digitizing. And the right person will come with perks. You won’t need to go back and forth endlessly with your suppliers because of little tweaks like color changes, incorrect alignment, poorly embroidered sample designs, edits, trims, stitching and movement. A good digitizer will be able to take care of all that upfront with a production-friendly design.
- **Expense.** Here’s the thing. If you want to bring a task in-house, you’re going to have to allocate resources to it. **That means you’ll have to shell out for expensive software and, if you aren’t hiring new people to handle it (another expense), you’ll have to learn it yourself.** If you maintain your typical work schedule, you will have to spend your free time learning the software — which, though not necessarily monetary, is still an expense. Not only that, but if you don’t solely do embroidery work at your business, you’ll have to update the software and equip the employees with training. Plus, you’ll have an expensive computer program likely just sitting there most of the time not getting used.
- **Technology.** Technology changes so quickly, anything you buy is practically outdated the second you get it back to your office. You can be confident, though, that outsourcing to an embroidery digitizing company means your client’s **work will be done on the most up-to-date version of software and machinery** — rather than



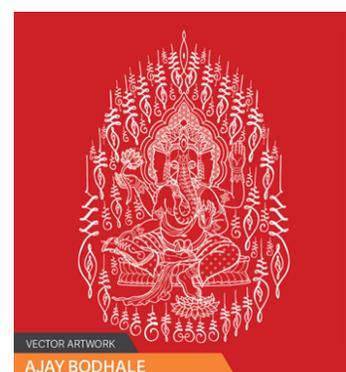
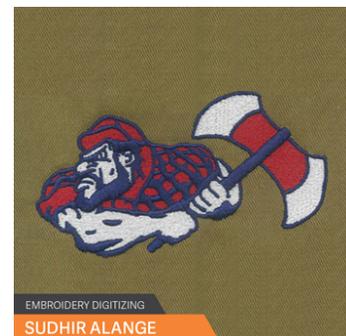
Under Insights, we also archive [past issues of this newsletter](#).

Feel free to contact us to request we cover any subjects that would help your business:

marketing@ideacustom.com.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR TEAM

Every month, we celebrate the designers whose work scores the highest impressions on Instagram. This time, **Sudhir Alange** won for embroidery digitizing and **Ajay Bodhale** won for vector artwork (again!). Keep up the great work, team!



hoping your five-year-old program doesn't crash in the middle of a job!

Luckily, [Idea Custom Solutions](#) can help you with all your embroidery digitizing needs. We've got the experts you require to get the job done efficiently and correctly. [Give us a try!](#)

SEO AND HOW YOUR SMALL BUSINESS SHOULD USE IT

At times, the promotional products industry can lag behind when it comes to technology, but it's never too late to catch up. If you haven't been implementing SEO best practices for your website, [Idea Custom Solutions](#) is here to help.

What is SEO?

First, let's learn what SEO actually is. The acronym stands for search engine optimization. Essentially, utilizing SEO means that your website, social media, Google and any other online business accounts you have are optimized to be more easily found online. Sites with great SEO tend to show up on the first results pages during online searches.

No, SEO isn't Dead.

You may have heard from many marketers that SEO is officially dead, content is king and no one optimizes for search engines anymore. But that's just not true. Business 2 Community notes that [as long as search engines exist, so will SEO](#) — otherwise, how will anyone find your company online?

Make it Work for You.

Here's what to do to make sure your company's SEO is getting the best results. First, amp up your on-page SEO. This means you'll need to [select keywords that describe what your business can do for others](#). Come up with a list: "marketing," "promotional products," and "branding" are good starts. Make sure those keywords are included in the content on your website.

You'll want to [check that the SEO for your website itself is up-to-date as well](#). That means optimizing URLs, creating title tags and meta descriptions (the text that shows up on the search page when someone googles your business) and including image alt text (the text that replaces an image if there are slow connections, errors occur or if viewers use screen readers).

Don't forget about links, either. There are two ways to tackle this: internal and external.

- **Internal links** are the links on your own page that link to content within your page. So maybe in your most recent blog post, you discuss the value of light-up pens. You'll want to link to the product page for those light-up pens within your own site. Determining the internal linking structure that works the best for your site can be quite complicated; [here's an excellent guide](#).
- **External links** are links to your site from other websites. Ideally, you'll want your website to be the authority of your particular part of the business. That way other sites will link to you without being asked. But if you aren't there yet, try writing guest posts for other, more popular sites. You can link to your website within the text and you'll be seen as an expert on the topics. You can also create

NOTABLE QUOTES



"Effort only fully releases its reward after a person **refuses to quit.**"

— Napoleon Hill



"**Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence.** Talent will not: nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent."

— Calvin Coolidge



"Failure is only the **opportunity to begin again**, this time more intelligently."

— Henry Ford



"If you want to be the best, you have to **do things that others aren't willing to do.**"

— Michael Phelps

digital education materials, an Amazon ebook about selling in the promotional products industry for example, that will link back to your site. And, if you use a lot of photography on your website, upload those images to Creative Commons with an attribution requirement to link back to your site whenever the image is used.

SEO can be a bit of a bear — and a bit of a bore — but it's more important than you think for your website.

At least graphic design can be simple, as well as fast and cost-effective when you [partner with Idea Custom Solutions for vector artwork, embroidery digitizing](#), image editing, virtual samples, marketing materials and more!

PROMO PRODUCTS ARE AFOOT

When it comes to promotional apparel, shirts tend to be the most popular. When someone is wearing a branded shirt, the logo is right there in front of everyone to see. But there's a new trend in town: statement socks. Really, things that go on your feet! It's a subtle style of branding. You don't necessarily know if a brand has penetrated your consciousness if you see someone wearing logoed socks, but the company name may pop into your head later that day unannounced.

If you want to get in on the trend now, follow these tips for selling statement socks to your customers.

1. **Be Bold.** Statement socks are just that: statements. People share their convictions, beliefs and personalities through the humble socks and no one wants to come off as drab or boring. So, pump up the color and designs! [Bright, unique patterns sell the best and are most likely to be shown off](#) — especially when the end users work for corporations that have strict dress codes. It's their subversive means of showing some flair in an almost-disallowed way.
2. **Make an Actual Statement.** Nonprofits and fundraiser groups are all over the statement sock movement. If the groups aren't selling them, they're giving the socks away as thank-you gifts for participating in events or donating — and people are starting to request them. Here's a good statistic to use when trying to convince a nonprofit or fundraiser group to buy socks from you: [75 percent of cause donors requested branded socks as thank-you gifts](#) and then instantly began to post them on social media without being prompted. Imagine how much more reach organizations can get with fun socks shared to millions of people online.
3. **Look Beyond the Sock.** For an even sneakier — and much more unusual — way of marketing, [suggest branded flip-flops to your clients](#). But not just any branded flip-flops. Suggest ones that have logos carved into the bottoms and they leave brand imprints in the sand as wearers walk along beaches. It's sneaky because the logo isn't easily seen when looking at the flip-flops, but almost everyone will stop and peer at unexpected imprints left behind. And the marketing blitz doesn't have to stop once summer's over. Dip your feet into the resort market and you'll have sales all year long.
4. **Tap into Pop Culture.** The best way to make a splash selling statement socks or those flip-flops is to tap into the overall



"Let me tell you the secret that has led to my goal.

[My strength lies solely in my tenacity.](#)"

— Louis Pasteur



"I am building a fire and every day I train, I add more fuel. At just [the right moment](#), I light the match."

— Mia Hamm



"I was taught [the way of progress is neither swift nor easy.](#)"

— Marie Curie



"Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, ['I will try again tomorrow.'](#)"

— Mary Anne Radmacher

popular consciousness. What's got the internet worked up right now? For example, it could be Shark Week (a new collection of Shark Week socks was launched for the series' 30th anniversary) or activism (thanks polarized citizens!) or just fluffy animals (the World Wildlife Fund has this down like promo product pros).

But if you can convince your customers to design a specific sock style — with Idea Custom Solutions' help, of course — which plays into pop culture or the greater scheme of interests at the moment, you can assure your customers they'll probably sell like hotcakes or be shared extensively on social media.

Register with us and you can request a quote for an original sock design or the execution of your concept in vector artwork or embroidery digitizing.



Some cool [#retro](#) items are making waves in the [#PromoProducts](#) industry this year.

<https://goo.gl/zYUdNp>

Tweet That!

It's [#PumpkinSpice](#) season! Here's all the new [#swag @starbucks](#) released. [#marketing](#) <https://goo.gl/qQxsp1>

Tweet That!

A big change is coming to [#MarketingMail](#) that's likely to affect the [#PromoProducts](#) industry. <https://goo.gl/2wDjt8>

Tweet That!

American Airlines was cut free from the lawsuit against it about toxic work [#uniforms](#). <https://goo.gl/n9MsJy>

Tweet That!

[#Baseball](#) season is in full swing. Here's a definitive ranking of all the [@MLB](#) [#uniforms](#). <https://goo.gl/Y9XkDT>

Tweet That!

These 10 trends prove to be the most popular [#GraphicDesign](#) styles in 2018 so far.

<https://goo.gl/U6B5Fh>

Tweet That!

Ever wonder how today's iconic internet [#logos](#) would look in the 80s? Here you go! [#branding](#)

<https://goo.gl/bzUjcz>

Tweet That!

Hey [@harleydavidson](#) fans, check out almost every gas tank [#logo](#) from the company. [#branding](#)

<https://goo.gl/BXK9AW>

Tweet That!

Looking at political [#logos](#) can make you see facts differently. Here's why. [#TheMoreYouKnow](#)

<https://goo.gl/XDrhYR>

Tweet That!

Learn the difference between [#fonts](#) and [#typefaces](#) to improve your [#branding](#), [#VisualIdentity](#).

<https://goo.gl/GWfqJ5>

Tweet That!

This illustrator creates stunning [#art](#) from a mix of portraits and [#typography](#). [#fonts](#) <https://goo.gl/a5LNUf>

Tweet That!

Give your company's [#SoMe](#) [#marketing](#) images a boost with these five tips. [#SocialMedia](#) <https://goo.gl/YGJTYP>

Tweet That!



"I am a slow walker, but I never walk back."

— Abraham Lincoln



"It always seems impossible until it's done."

— Nelson Mandela

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Sachin Awaghade

Senior Production Associate,
Digitizing Team

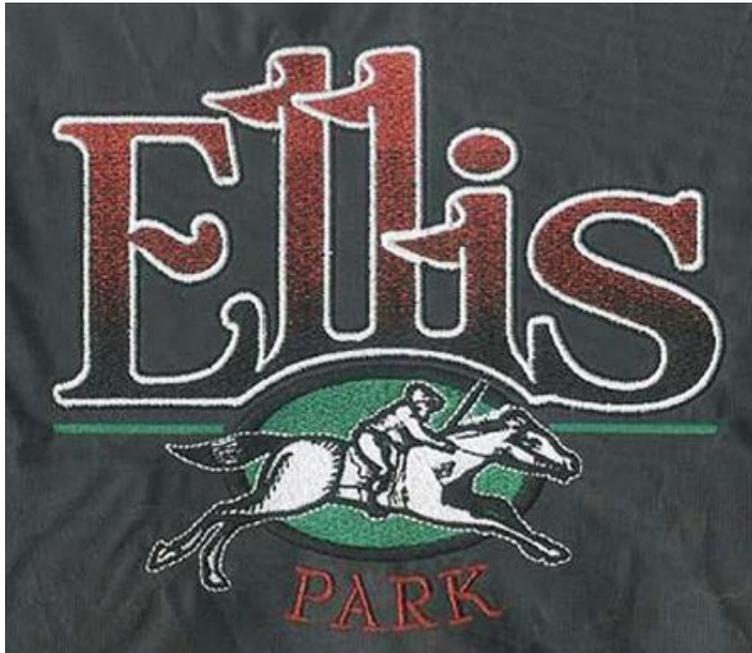
Sachin has been with Idea Custom Solutions for the past 11 years. His typical day includes discussions with superiors about the workload, priorities and plans for completing orders. He thinks people outside the company should know that our mission is to produce the best quality designs in less time.

One of his favorite parts of the job is working with new employees, guiding them and sharing his knowledge. He also enjoys learning something new all the time and mastering software that is relevant to his work. After all these years, he has a thorough knowledge of almost all the software used at Idea Custom Solutions.



DESIGN SHOWCASE

Embroidery Digitizing



Vector Artwork



His words of wisdom for other colleagues are, "Enjoy your work and always face problems rather than avoid them."

Sachin was born and raised in Pune. He and his wife live with their daughter and son, as well as his parents. He says his goal is to "bring happiness to my family."

In his free time, Sachin likes to explore nature, roam around town and find new places to ride his bike. "I am a foodie, so my favorite hobby is to taste new varieties of local food." In addition to buying a super car, his dream some day is to travel around India.

Given the opportunity, he would like to surprise his coworkers by singing a beautiful song or preparing a delicious dish for them. Ultimately, he hopes to be known for the knowledge and experiences he shared with people.

CLIENTS ARE RAVING

"Thank you so much. You guys did awesome today. I appreciate you helping me, and listening to my concerns."

**eCommerce Promotional
Products Distributor**

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



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