

# sublimation quick stop

WITH MATT WOODHOUSE & KEVIN LUMBERG



## Our Introduction To The Series

The world of sublimation can be an incredibly lucrative venture. You'll create beautiful products which will make your customers say "wow", with high profit margins, and the technology has a low barrier of entry. These factors, in combination, can be the "ace in the hole" for many businesses. As with anything we do, there are always ways to be more productive and successful. Often, the difference between success and failure is having the right advice to guide you through the process.

The goal of this bi-monthly series is to arm a sublimator with additional tools to speed up production, minimize waste, maximize profit potential, and troubleshoot process or equipment issues. We will be addressing several topics that are based upon commonly asked questions and important but commonly overlooked topics.

Below is a synopsis of each of the forthcoming articles:

### TROUBLESHOOTING YOUR SUBLIMATION SYSTEM

When working with any type of equipment, problems may arise. Therefore, having technical support available when you purchase equipment is extremely important. However, even with technical support, doing basic troubleshooting on your own is also essential.

This will save you time in the long run, and also increase your confidence in working with your equipment. This article will help you diagnose problems, and get you back to producing products.

### WHERE'S THE MONEY

Once you have created a beautiful-looking gift or award item, the next question asked is commonly "What do I charge for it?" Several tools have been developed as aids for answering this—and many other business-oriented questions.

We will identify these tools, and how to make the most of what they have to offer. We will also discuss ways to think outside the box in terms of sales and marketing.



There are various tools available to sublimators that will speed up production, minimize waste and maximize profit potential.



With a little imagination, sublimated ceramic tiles can create a stunning first impression.

### CERAMIC TILES ARE GREAT TO SUBLIMATE—NOW DO SOMETHING WITH THEM

Sublimated ceramic tiles create a stunning first impression. Once people see the tiles, they are often excited; however, you have to give the person a purpose for the tile. Show them what the tile can do for them.

Luckily, there are many things that sublimated tiles can do, and they have more flexible uses than you may be aware of. You just have to have a little imagination.

### IMAGE ACQUISITION: SOURCES FOR FINDING STOCK IMAGES AND WORKING WITH CUSTOMER-SUPPLIED ARTWORK

Looking for that perfect image to use as a background for that award or gift item you are creating? Why reinvent the wheel? Libraries of clip-art and photographs have been compiled for just this purpose. We will identify several sources of stock artwork that can be used free of royalty charges.

Customers will often bring in a photo or a disc with art they want to have put on an item. In a perfect world, our customers would bring in a graphic or photo ready to be added to a design. Unfortunately, this is seldom the case. The key to success is educating the customer on the requirements for a good reproduction. We will discuss bringing photos into a digital environment using scanners and digital cameras, and how to choose the best of each.

### SUBLIMATED APPAREL PRODUCTION—VOLUME, QUALITY OR BOTH

Apparel is a valuable product category to most customers. The challenge, however, is being able to quickly produce the shirts, while easily avoiding common mistakes.

We will go over available helpful tools and equipment to ensure your success. We also will go step-by-step through the workflow of creating a shirt in a volume production environment.

### AS FOR TODAY—A QUICK STOP QUICK TIP

Allow us to set the scene. A baby has been baptized, and a large family is gathered afterward to celebrate the occasion. The proud mother and father receive a stunning mahogany cross plaque as a gift. The plaque has a photo of the baby, the baby's name, date, and location of the ceremony. Everyone gathers round to catch a glimpse of the thoughtful and personalized gift.

It is even passed around the room so that everyone can see it. You could say that it was the hit of the party—in every way but one. For the business that created this remarkable and noteworthy plaque, an important advertising opportunity was missed. A simple branding of the product could have led to increased sales opportunities.

Every product that leaves your shop should have your business information attached to it in some way. With sublimation, branding is easy to accomplish, and the return can be tremendous. Decal material is one easy way to brand with sublimation. These materials are durable, and have a very strong adhesive.

It is easy to sublimate your business information onto this material and cut them into small squares which can then be applied to the bottom of mugs, back of plaques, tiles and other items. Take caution, as you do not want to disfigure the gift.

Another easily overlooked opportunity to brand items is on garments. Print your business information in single line and sublimate it to the inside hem of each shirt. You will not disfigure the shirt, and your information will be permanently marked on every shirt that leaves your shop.

Now picture yourself back at the baptism occasion from before. An entire roomful of people have seen the wonderful reaction of the parents to the thoughtful gift. They are

wondering what it is—and where it came from. As the plaque is passed around the room, your potential customers will look at the gift, and they will see where it was purchased. Hopefully, they will borrow that idea for the next event.

### IN CONCLUSION

Although producing sublimated products can have several different ins and outs, the key to success is a solid roadmap. Our goal for this and future articles is to unlock the doors to help you develop your own roadmap to success.

We would also encourage you to email us questions. We'll select the ones which affect the most people and answer them in forthcoming articles. So email away!

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

This column will be alternately written between Matt Woodhouse and Kevin Lumberg; both are long-time industry experts working at Johnson Plastics.

#### *Matt Woodhouse*

With a lifetime passion for electronics and computers, I started working in the consumer electronics world in 1994. About six years ago, a family member became involved in the sublimation industry. After being blown away with the images I saw put into several different products, I was sold. I needed to be part of this fast-paced and exciting industry.

I began with Johnson Plastics over five years ago. The product offering at that time was paltry, to say the least, in comparison to what we have today. Throughout that time, I have been able to offer advice to businesses around the country on new equipment, technical support and product applications for sublimation.

#### *Kevin Lumberg*

I started into sublimation just like many of the people reading this article. I was planning on opening a small retail gift shop, and I wanted to add something to the shop to help diversify it a bit, and help bring in customers. I figured that I should print T-shirts, and I needed to find out the best way to do that. I did a quick internet search, and found that strange word *sublimation*. I had no idea whatsoever what it meant, and barely knew how to pronounce it. But it wasn't long before I purchased my sublimation printer and a heat press, and before I knew it, I was producing and selling products.

I built the business for three years, and during this time I went through all the growing pains of learning a new system and troubleshooting equipment. I found and tested new products, and I learned how to market them to my customers.

Shortly before my lease expired, as I was looking to renew my lease, I got the news that would change everything. I found out that the overpass was going to be rebuilt, cutting me off from the majority of my market. At that point, I had three choices. Stay where I was and die a slow business death. Move and double my rent, and start over in a new location. Or find a job. As they say, the rest is history.

*Matt Woodhouse and Kevin Lumberg are Sublimation Sales Specialists at Johnson Plastics. Visit Johnson Plastics on the web at [www.johnsonplastics.com](http://www.johnsonplastics.com). For further information, Matt can be reached direct at 866-869-7829 or by email at [mattw@johnsonplastics.com](mailto:mattw@johnsonplastics.com). Kevin can be reached at 800-869-7800 ext. 5737 or by email at [kevinl@johnsonplastics.com](mailto:kevinl@johnsonplastics.com).*



**We'll discuss bringing photos into a digital environment using scanners and digital cameras, and how to choose the best of each.**

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