

## Processes & Techniques

# The Value of Specialty Inks

Whether it's puff, suede or glitter, specialty inks add pizzazz to custom printed shirts. When used effectively, these inks can create a look that literally jumps off the piece. Your clients will appreciate the work and you'll reap the financial benefits.

*Brian Greul*

**S**pecial inks spice up the work you do for your clients. But, you have to know what inks work well, what their limitations are and how they blend together to achieve the best result. Too often, salespeople stay away from things that they aren't sure about or have had a bad experience with. However, special inks increase the value you add for your clients.

### Not Your Ordinary Ink

Color and space are the two primary dimensions that we work in when screen printing apparel. However, we can also add depth, which brings a third dimension to the print. Most specialty inks affect either your color or the depth of the print.

One thing to consider about specialty inks is they should complement, improve, or accentuate the design, not dominate it. It's often possible to add them as you go; however, you will get better results if you incorporate them from the beginning. With some of the more advanced inks, you literally must design the print around it. The results will be striking and impressive.

There are a few different categories of special inks – glitters and shimmers, these inks use particles to reflect light and give a glittery appearance; metallic

inks that appear to be metallic; puff and textures such as suede; foils, which are limited in durability and more expensive; and gels and high-density inks that are extremely thick.

We'll concentrate here on the first three categories, because they are rea-

free. Metallic can tarnish if not cared for properly.

Both inks however are limited in the print size. I don't recommend anything smaller than 1/4" for glitter and 1/8" for shimmer. That means the narrowest point is at least 1/8". That's a good safe

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sonably safe to use and can be integrated into most work. The latter two categories can be expensive and difficult to work with.

### Glitter And Shimmer

The easiest inks to work with are glitter and shimmer inks. Glitter inks actually have flakes of glitter in the ink. Shimmer inks have much smaller particles. These can be metallic-based, or more commonly plastic-based flakes. Plastic is preferred because it is care-

design spec. I also recommend going with plastic-based inks when possible, mainly because they are non-toxic and they are very durable. Metallic glitter inks tend to suffer from shedding sometimes.

Shimmers are “bullet-proof,” relatively speaking, and are used very commonly. Almost all decorators can work with them. They are a tad more expensive but you shouldn't be up-charged by a good printer for shimmer. Glitters are more expensive and difficult to work with in

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