

# TEN TIPS FOR CAP EMBROIDERY

## Practical pointers to successful embroidery on caps...

# 1

### **Choose the cap brand that fits your frames:**

Caps from different headwear brands vary more than you might imagine, in terms of shape, size and so on. This means that some brands' caps will fit your cap frames better than others.

Request sample caps from different

manufacturers and check which products fit your equipment the best. Once you've identified the best fit, use only those products and brands. Put together a sample kit of the caps that you know will embroider well using your machinery and present this to customers as their product choices. If the customer insists on using another brand/cap style, make sure you request a sample and run it on your machines before committing to the order, and charge accordingly.

# 2

### **Invest in a selection of cap frames:**

Many embroiderers have only a single type of frame—the one that came with their machine.

This severely limits the range of caps they can offer to their customers. To extend product choice, invest in a selection of

cap frames—it's an additional financial investment, but it's well worth it if you are serious about cap embroidery and customer service.

# 3

**Buy a 270 frame:** These frames enable you to embroider both the front and the sides of the cap simultaneously, without the need to rehoop the cap and sew out a separate design. Using some creativity you can create stunning wraparound designs that will impress any customer and add value to any cap.

# 4

**Design height:** The style of the cap you are embroidering will pretty much determine the maximum height of the design you can apply to it. A design that is too tall will cause the machine arm to push against the cap fabric, resulting in misaligned outlines, crooked letters

and circles that are transformed into ovals. As a rule of thumb, stick to a maximum height for your designs of 5 cm (2")—it's much easier to increase the size for a larger cap, if required, than it is to decrease it for a smaller cap. If you need extra height, you can probably go up to 5.75 cm (2.25") on low profile, unstructured caps and visors, and 6.25 cm (2.5") on Pro-Style caps.

# 5

**Wide designs:** For wide designs (more than 10 cm/4" wide) on the front of a 6-panel cap, or when embroidering small letters close to the peak on an unstructured cap, digitize from the middle of the design outward to avoid puckering.

# 6

**Coping with center seams:** Firstly, try to source caps with flat center seams, as they will reduce puckering and make it much easier to achieve a high quality result.

Then take a look at your needle—it often pays to switch your usual 75/11 to 80/12 to reduce

the chances of the needle being deflected by the seam. You should also switch your ballpoint for a sharp point, as sharps cut through the fabric, again reducing the risk of the needle being deflected. Teflon-coated needles may provide an added performance benefit, since they are likely to penetrate the fabric more smoothly than traditional stainless steel needles. You might also want to consider using polyester thread, which is stronger than rayon and will reduce the risk of thread breakage.

# 7

**Outlined lettering:** If your design includes lettering with an outline, digitize so that one letter is complete (that is, digitize both colors) before moving to the next letter. This will help to ensure that the outlines are aligned correctly.

# 8

**Choosing and using backings:** Unstructured caps require heavy, stiff backing to maintain the cap's shape during sewing and limit distortion of the design. You could opt to use tear away backing—use two pieces on especially 'relaxed' cap styles—or instead, use sheets of copier paper, folded three times, like a business letter. Folded to this size, the paper will fit almost any cap front and adds more stability than the heaviest fabric backing. When finished, it tears out just like standard tear-away backing. Don't bother with backing for leather caps, but do increase stitch lengths and column width, whilst reducing the density of fill stitches to avoid the 'etching effect', (whereby the needle creates a perforated edge around the design allowing it to be 'popped' out of the cap fabric like a postage stamp). Use a single, continuous piece of backing when working with a 270 frame.

# 9

**Appliques:** Consider using an appliqué for made from heavier weight fabrics with a high pile, such as corduroy or fleece—these cause stitches to become distorted or sink into the pile.

Extra underlay and pull compensation may help, but using an appliqué will give you all the stability you need to embroider the design to the same high standard as when working directly on to a conventional cotton twill style.

# 10

**Digitize for caps:** It may be tempting to save time and expense by using the logo for the customer's cap order that you digitized for the left chest embroidery on their polo shirts. Don't; save yourself a lot of problems by digitizing the design again, specifically for the caps.