

Title:

Understanding Screen Printing

Word Count:

1500

Summary:

This article hopes to leave you with a basic understanding of how the process works, how the cost structure of most firms work, and why these things are the way they are. Hopefully you will have a better understanding of the process, which will make you feel more confident if you purchase t-shirts, and if nothing else

Keywords:

screen printing, custom t shirts, custom t-shirts, tshrit printing

Article Body:

Anytime that you are in an industry you find that you learn a lot about it that others outside of the industry are for the most part unaware. This information may not be life altering and sometimes many, even those who rely on the industry, care to live a life of ignorance and bliss they assume will come with it. The educated buyer on the other hand wants to know at least a little bit about the activities that the companies do business with. I myself am a screen printer, and I have found that many people do not understand how the screen printing process work and as such are often overwhelmed or even irritated about things they do not understand. IAnytime that you are in an industry you find that you learn a lot about it that others outside of the industry are for the most part unaware. This information may not be life altering and sometimes many, even those who rely on the industry, care to live a life of ignorance and bliss they assume will come with it. The educated buyer on the other hand wants to know at least a little bit about the activities that the companies do business with. I myself am a screen printer, and I have found that many people do not understand how the screen printing process work and as such are often overwhelmed or even irritated about things they do not understand. I hope to leave you with a basic understanding of how the process works, how the cost structure of most firms work, and why these things are the way they are. Hopefully you will have a better understanding of the process, which will make you feel more confident if you purchase t-shirts, and if nothing else. Screen printing is a process by which a layer of ink or paint is run over a screen with a fine mesh. Portions of the screen are blocked off to prevent the ink from passing thru that area. Where the ink does pass, an image

is left upon the t-shirts. This process can be repeated for the number of different colors desired. In most cases a particular area will require a max of four screens. "Four color process" as it is called takes the three primary colors (red, yellow, and blue) and black to generate any color in the visible electromagnetic spectrum. So for any one picture and size, four screens can more than suffice. More screens would be required only if you started to put multiple images on the same t-shirts.

There is a prodigious variety of machines (presses) that allow this process to happen. The simplest is a manual press which requires that every screen is run over by hand. This is best used for small orders with a single image and color. The other large category I will discuss is automatic or auto presses. These presses run over multiple screens and t-shirts at the same time. This is excellent for large orders with many screens. Both of these presses will produce a product which is indistinguishable in its final state. Finally, the last part of the procedure uses an industrial dryer to set the ink in place permanently.

Now having knowledge of how the t-shirts are produced it is now possible to understand how the cost structure works. Screen printers charge per screen. This is because setting up a screen is a tedious process requires accuracy to ensure the image comes out as desired. Many companies may claim not charge for screen, but it must be incorporated somewhere, whether in higher run costs or higher costs for the prescreened t-shirts. More screens mean a higher cost and can lead some designs to be impractical. For example, making three shirts with a four color process means that the cost of every screen gets spread out over three shirts, and that translates into very expensive t-shirts. This is why you will often find that screen printers have a minimum order. Screen printing does not become economically viable until you produce around twenty shirts. This allows economies of scale to take over and greatly drive down the average cost. In addition, the ability to use the auto press means that a person doesn't have to run every screen; rather they must only watch and load the machine. This means it is can go by quicker and this is another reason that larger orders cost less per shirt.

The other reason that the average cost goes down has to do with the textile manufacturers. Screen printers rely on other companies to actually make the un-inked shirt. These manufacturers bring down their average cost as the quantity goes up. This is passed on to the screen printers and then on to their customers. In a nutshell, more screens make the cost go up, and more t-shirts bring the average cost down.

Hopefully this article was informative as far as enlightening you about the process of screen printing. When searching for a company to do your screen printing, you can take this information with you and decrease the information asymmetry that gives screen printers an advantage. Now you will know why the costs appreciate or depreciate with the individual order. Take this information

and help yourself. In my opinion a good printing company should tell you all this should you want to know.

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