

The Essence of Cool

Brent Belles finds his competitive edge in offering the most unique solutions and logoed gear for his clients' marketing challenges.



Brent Belles is president of B-Squared Printing and Marketing Solutions. Contact: brent@coolmarketingolutions.com or www.coolmarketingolutions.com.

After graduating from Kent State University, Brent Belles started working with his father in the printing industry before starting his own marketing business in 2002. Today, Belles is landing new accounts and providing the newest, coolest products to his clients.

Wearables: Do you still work with your father?

BB: We work with my father's printing business on a daily basis – it can be my biggest headache and my biggest asset at the same time. When we've really been in a crunch, he has helped us out.

Wearables: Does B-Squared Printing and Marketing Solutions target any particular markets?

BB: I target any company that wants to work with a marketing firm that offers brand consistency and unique marketing solutions. We take on clients who understand that we make them look the best in all media, whether that's on a business card, Web site, T-shirt, billboard or golf shirt.

Wearables: Do you specialize in a certain type of wearables?

BB: We specialize in golf apparel, but do business in all apparel areas including casual wear, outerwear and headwear.

understand the turnaround demand and keep up with the maintenance on their embroidery heads to ensure the tightest stitching. We also try to do screen printing wholesale, but that can be tricky. We always talk to clients to see exactly what they need. Once determining that, we decide what type of decorator to use.

Wearables: Any tips for dealing with decorators?

BB: When you're the middle man, you simply need to be honest. An intelligent client knows you're not decorating the shirts yourself. It's important to explain that you've done the research over the years and you can make sound recommendations. If your relationship with the client is good, he'll trust you.

Wearables: What challenges have you faced owning your own business?

BB: Cash has been our biggest problem. Every dollar we make we reinvest into our business through marketing, entertaining and research. To overcome cash flow issues, we got a line of credit for a rainy day. My accountant advised me that we didn't need the money now, but we may need it down the road.

Wearables: How do you handle mistakes?

BB: If something gets messed up with an order, don't immediately point the finger – be honest and accept responsibility. Hopefully you have a good paper trail in terms of who ordered the item, who approved the proof and when it was approved. If you find that the client missed something and it's his fault, he should accept responsibility – but cut him a break on a rerun.

Wearables: Can you offer any advice for fellow entrepreneurs?

BB: Find a way to be different. Most vendors will sell to all the promotional products companies. Try being unique by offering products your competition doesn't have. Also, use custom imprinted catalogs, samples, clothing racks and special pricing. Knowledge about your products is a must if you want to last in this business. I personally play a lot of golf and tell my clients to buy polos that not only look good and wear well, but garments that wash well and last. I tell them, if I wear it, sweat in it, wash it and wear it multiple times and it still looks great, it's a good buy. ■

“We ask all of our potential buyers to try on and feel the garments they're purchasing.”



Wearables: What sets you apart from others?

BB: We try to avoid any potential issues upfront by telling them the possible negative characteristics of whatever garment they're looking at using. We ask all of our potential buyers to try on and feel the garments they're purchasing. I don't want customers to just pick something out of a catalog because the model wearing it looks good or because it's their favorite color. I want them to really see what they're buying. We have a very large inventory of samples from various vendors to ensure clients can see and feel everything available.

Wearables: What types of decorators do you work with?

BB: We try to work with wholesale vendors only. In an extremely competitive market, wholesale companies