

● GETTING TO KNOW ...

## Nathan Brown, Dyenomite (*asi/51185*)



*Nathan Brown is the president of Dyenomite (asi/51185).*

### How did the company get started?

It was created in 2000. I was working for two gentlemen that became my partners at a screen-printing operation whose business was supplying high school and sports teams with apparel. One of their items happened to be tie dyes. The reason I got involved was because they had difficulty finding a reliable supplier. At that time, most of the people that were doing tie dyes were mom-and-pop organizations. That's how we decided to develop and make them on our own. I got some financial backing and opened up Dyenomite with just one customer.

### Did you have previous experience in apparel?

No. For the most part my experience was running a screen-printing press. I was in college at Ohio State University at the time and I was doing it for what was essentially my beer-money fund.

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### What was it like that first year?

There was a huge learning curve involved with doing tie dyes. A lot of people make them as a hobby, in art class or summer camp project – and it's very easy to make a one-time tie dye look great. The problem is that it's very difficult to make two pieces be consistent enough where you can process an order with them to outfit a team or organization with two or three dozen that look consistent. It took probably about six months to put that behind me.

### What exactly does the tie dye process involve?

We take a standard white 100% cotton T-shirt. It gets pretreated to remove any oils or waxes from the manufacturing process. It is then tied into a design and dyed. Then it's cured for about 12 hours and then washed five times to remove any residual dye and set the color. It's a very hands-on and labor intensive process. Some people complain that tie dyes are expensive compared to a normal white or color T-shirt. The reason for that is all the high level of labor that goes into

the garment and making the design on the shirt.

### Do you use special dyes?

We use fiber reactive dyes. These are dyes that bond to natural fibers by chemically bonding to the sucrose fibers in cotton. That process adds to the colorfastness and creates the intense color our shirts are known for.

### When did you enter the promotional industry and what was the biggest adjustment?

At first we serviced some other screen printers, but by 2002 we became a listed member. The toughest part was learning the nomenclature of the industry, such as the pricing codes. It was also difficult learning how to work with and process orders from both larger distributors and smaller companies.

### What has been your biggest challenge?

The biggest thing has been upsizing our equipment to our current production capacity. That was a big jump for us because we went from basically small lightweight commercial machines to now we use industrial capacity type machines to do our processes. That is something that is one

of our big advantages; we have equipment that allows us to set dyes at a much higher temperature which adds to the color fastness of the garment that some companies just don't have the capacity to do.

### How has the company evolved?

Our main focus is still tie dyes but as a way to diversify our product, we've added some other items that we think our core customers would purchase. We do a lot of stuff for team and camp events, so we selected products that married up with that kind of end-user. We've been doing footwear for about three years and added camouflage shirts last year in a wide variety of color combinations.

### What's new for 2008?

We've added some new colors – pink and kelly green – into our footwear line as well as youth sizing. We also have started offering organic cotton T-shirts. With tie dye there is not a new product but there is an infinite amount of ways you can dye a shirt when you think of the tie patterns and dye patterns that can all go together. At least once a day we are creating something that we've never created before. \*