



UniformReuse.co.uk Resource Report

Logo removal in corporatewear to enhance re-use potential

Why reuse corporatewear?

With sustainability, recycling and re-use becoming more and more important in everyday life, corporatewear is a sector of the textiles industry which has great potential in making a difference to the quantities of garments which go into landfill each year.

Why remove logos?

It has been identified that one of the key barriers surrounding the recycling and re-use potentials of corporatewear garments is the logo. As stipulated in HM Revenue & Customs taxation requirement EIM32475, the logo should be unable to be removed by the wearer if a deduction on the clothing is to be granted (HM Revenue & Customs, 2005). A detachable badge is not deemed enough to warrant granting a deduction for the clothing. This means that the majority of corporatewear garments have permanent logos applied to them, which can make re-use a difficult option at end of life.

Why not remove logos?

There are many security issues surrounding what can happen to corporatewear at the end of its life, and different companies have different policies regarding this. There are also problems facing what can be done with a garment which has a logo which cannot be removed effectively. Companies do not want the risk of their garments turning up on the High Street with the complete logo intact as this could enable people wearing the garments to pose as company employees, which could lead to dangerous situations if the garments were to get into the wrong hands.

Embroidery

Embroidered logos are highly difficult to remove as they can be incredibly intricate and sometimes have hundreds of stitches in their design. The number of needle holes used in embroidery designs is very high and means that the fabric would be damaged if the design were to be unpicked. The only viable re-use options would be either to over-embroider a logo onto the logo currently on the garment (this however could prove costly and time-consuming, which may make it not commercially viable), or to use an adhesive to apply a new logo over the top. The costs and equipment needed would have to be fully researched to determine whether this would be a viable option.

Heat seals

Heat seal logos can pose problems when looking at the potential to reuse a corporatewear garment. There are many different types of heat seal and digitally printed logos which are made up differently. Some of these can be polyester or acrylic based which, if placed onto a garment which has also a polyester or acrylic fibre composition, would destroy the garment in the process if the logo were removed using a chemical or solvent. The chemicals and solvents which dissolve heat seal logos would be highly toxic and dangerous to use and they would require a large chemical unit in order to carry out the process. Therefore it is likely to be harmful to the environment and commercially non-viable to carry out removal.

Problems and Solutions for Logo Removal in Corporatewear

Logo types

Logo types can include the following; embroidery, heat seals, prints, tax tags and Velcro removable tabs. They can be found on all types of garments and there is no standard type of logo used on any one type of garment. The logo is dependant upon the requirements of the customer, which means that standardisation is difficult and each product type has to be analysed individually.





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Overprints

The alternatives which could be found for enhancing the re-use of corporatewear garments which have a heat seal logo applied to them would be overprinting of the logo with a re-branded design or using an adhesive to over-apply a logo. By doing this, any security risk would be significantly reduced to a point where it could almost be eliminated. This would be due to the fact that a new heat seal logo applied over the top of an existing logo could not be removed easily or effectively. In order for the logo to be removed, the user would have to have access to harmful chemicals and solvents and a unit in which to process these. There are products available on the market which claim to be able to remove heat seal logos and emblems through a spray solvent. Tests have shown that such logos can be removed in this way, but not without leaving a mark. This would render the garment unable to be resold.

Tax tags

Tax tags are also a common logo type used in corporatewear. They can be used on garments such as jackets, blouses, shirts, skirts, trousers, safety wear and protective clothing. Tax tags are usually inserted into seams of garments which makes their removal possible only by either cutting off the tag as close to the seam as possible or by unpicking the seam, removing the tag and closing the seam. This process can be time-consuming and expensive in terms of labour costs involved, as each garment would have to be processed individually.

Conclusions

Overcoming the barrier of removal of a logo on a corporatewear garment is a very difficult issue. There are many factors to take into consideration, with the main one being the end use or market for the garment.

Over-printing and branding of items could be made commercially possible with the right logo and costs. There are companies in the industry which could take up reprocessing of garments and, as long as a viable end market is found, this process could be made commercial and would justifiably increase the number of corporatewear garments which are diverted from landfill.

Logo removal is not the most commercially viable option and would not be practical to undertake. There are issues surrounding the use of harmful chemicals and solvents to remove logos, which is neither environmentally friendly nor economically viable.

We therefore conclude that the most sensible and viable option, for corporatewear garments with a permanent logo which cannot be removed, would be to overprint the logo currently on the garment using a heat seal or an adhesive to attach a new logo. For garments with a tax tag the solution, if it could be carried out neatly and cost effectively, is to cut off the tag.

Kate Riley – February 2009

