

Shop Makeover For Linda Gadwood of Logo Linda, Omaha, NB



An expert seamstress, Linda Gadwood thought starting an embroidery business would be a snap. But the Omaha woman ran into more snags than she expected. Embroidery Coach Joyce Jagger came to the rescue, helping Gadwood jumpstart productivity and elevate the quality of her craft.

By Theresa Hegel
Photography by Kathy Cordes

Linda Gadwood didn't expect such a steep learning curve when she opened up Logo Linda, a modest 17-head contract embroidery shop in Omaha a few years ago. But the expert seamstress and empty nester quickly became overwhelmed, trying to figure out both the business and technical side of her livelihood. "I didn't realize exactly how hard it was going to be," she says, traces of desperation still evident in her mild Midwestern voice. "I felt like I was just on an island by myself; I didn't know where to go to get help."

She struggled to figure out embroidery basics, like hooping and optimal digitizing settings. There were times when she ruined garments because she didn't double-check the hooping before running the machine. "It's surprisingly easy for garments to come out crooked," she says. "That was my school of hard knocks."

Another issue was time management. Gadwood and her husband, Terry, a full-time machine operator, often spent long hours and Saturday shifts, catching up with work at the shop. "We joke that we're connected at the hip," Gadwood says. But the couple would have preferred to spend some of that together time away from the office.

Despite all of the overtime, Logo Linda was also in danger of losing business from one of its largest manufacturing clients, whose sales rep was dissatisfied with the quality of the shop's

work, complaining of lettering that was fuzzy around the edges. The adjustments Gadwood made to her pull compensation and underlay settings weren't having the desired effect, and the sales rep was threatening to take business elsewhere, to a large supplier already doing a lot of the firm's decoration jobs.

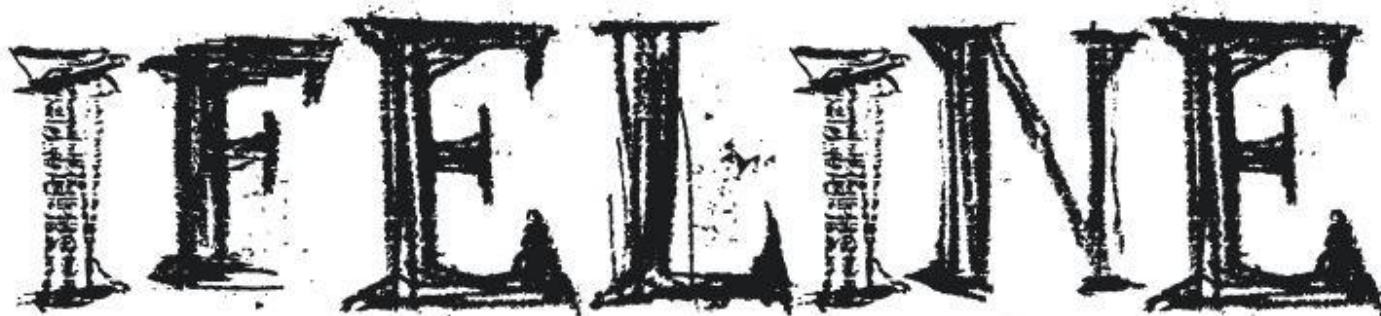
Gadwood didn't know where to turn until someone pointed her to industry veteran Joyce Jagger's embroidery training website. After watching videos on how to maintain machines and other technical tutorials, Gadwood was hooked. She flew out to a seminar Jagger held in Binghamton, NY, and was the first to sign up for The Embroidery Coach's one-on-one mentoring program. "Had I been working with Joyce from the beginning, my business would have taken a different path," Gadwood says. "That's why I'm glad and anxious to be able to work with her."

“If somebody came in and asked me how much work I have in-house, I'd never have been able to tell you.”

Linda Gadwood, Logo Linda

The Process

One of the first things Jagger notices about Logo Linda is a lack of organization and defined processes, starting with how Gadwood and employees handle incoming inventory. Cardboard boxes in varying sizes are stacked nearly ceiling-high onto two wooden pallets along one wall. "They're not even counting the work, inspecting the garments or anything," Jagger says. "There's no process at all to get them ready to embroider." Not only that, but starting a particular job often requires the machine operator first to disassemble, then reassemble the looming cardboard





Prior to Joyce Jagger's intervention, Logo Linda didn't have a system for processing incoming orders, leading to a disorganized workflow.



Jagger helped Linda Gadwood organize her production area, with an eye toward efficiency.



The Embroidery Coach advised Gadwood to install a shelving unit in the shop's inbound inventory area, to give easier access to shipments.



Gadwood set up a cap-hooping station adjacent to one of her machines to help speed production.



Thanks to Jagger, Linda and Terry (pictured) Gadwood have increased productivity by 60%, cutting back on evening and weekend overtime as well.

About the Series

Stitches received such positive feedback from its August "Can This Shop Be Saved?" feature that we decided to launch a recurring series, focusing on struggling shops that are transforming themselves with the help of expert intervention. We won't be neglecting previous makeover subjects, however. Each installment of the series will include exclusive online coverage of shops profiled in past issues, updating readers on their continuing achievements.



Scan this code to learn about changes Craig Wold has made to Point Embroidery & Screen in Stevens Point, WI, since his shop was featured in the August issue.



tower to reach the needed inventory, wasting precious production time.

Jagger advises Gadwood to install a large shelving unit over the pallets, so every box is easily accessible. "It's much easier to find stuff," Jagger says. Deliveries are immediately inspected and logged in. A staging table nearby allows employees to stack garments by size, review thread choices and make sure the order is ready for hooping

and embroidery. "That saves all of the time that the machine operator has been spending getting garments ready at the machine," Jagger says.

The tweaks to the staging area are just one of many adjustments Jagger suggests to the shop's floor plan. She has Gadwood move various tables and pieces of equipment within the shop to optimize the workflow and shave time off each job. A perfect

example is the shop's hat-hooping station. "The way they are hooping caps is horrible," Jagger says. The hooping device is clamped to an embroidery machine set up way too low. Not only is it a recipe for back pain, but the operator can't see where to clip the sides of the cap, resulting in less-than-optimal hooping. "They don't know the difference," Jagger says. "You don't want to have to bend over, especially not

“They’re not even counting the work, inspecting the garments or anything. There’s no process at all to get them ready to embroider.”

Joyce Jagger, The Embroidery Coach

when you have large orders to get out.”

Jagger has Gadwood install a higher table next to the embroidery machines to attach the cap hooper. The table and shelves above store an array of hoops and backing material, all at the operator’s fingertips. “It’s really helping our efficiency,” Gadwood says.

Like many embroiderers Jagger works with, Gadwood spends little time planning her day out. “We guess at how long things are going to take us,” Gadwood says. “If somebody came in and asked me how much work I have in-house, I’d never have been able to tell you.” Jagger sets Gadwood up with machine scheduling and daily planning worksheets, helping her quantify her pricing and time out her day. The paperwork makes a huge difference, Gadwood says. “Now I know our total hours of production.”

Jagger also helps Gadwood improve the quality of her embroidery, teaching her to tweak digitizing settings for various fabrics, to ensure that logos come out crisp. Other areas where Jagger is guiding her pupil: website design and employee hiring. “She’s done everything I’ve told her,” Jagger says. “She hasn’t fought me on anything.”

The Payoff

Gadwood says her husband calls Jagger the “she-saved-our-bacon lady” – with good reason, too: Jagger has already helped Gadwood increase productivity by 60%, while still reducing overtime. The best part? No more Saturday shifts for the Gadwoods.

The quality of Logo Linda’s embroidery is also on the rise, thanks to Jagger’s digitizing tips. “We know we’re putting out a much better product,” Gadwood says. Customers have also noticed. The sales rep from the large manufacturing firm has stopped threatening to pull busi-

SPOTLIGHT:

Decorating Baseball Caps

One of the problem areas at Logo Linda was the setup for hooping caps. Here are three tips to improve the efficiency and quality of hat decoration:

- 1. Purchase a cap-hooping device.** But make sure you mount it correctly. The device should be above your waist, but below your chest. If you mount it too low, you run the risk of backaches and slower production time, says Joyce Jagger, The Embroidery Coach.
- 2. Edit your stitch file.** Because they’re dimensional, caps require a different stitch sequence than flat garments, says Erich Campbell, digitizer/e-commerce manager at Albuquerque, NM-based Black Duck Embroidery and Screen Printing (asi/700415). “Caps have to run from the center of the cap out; otherwise, they’ll ripple out when they run and not be very stable,” he says.
- 3. Slow down.** A typical hat design should run at about 600 stitches per minute with a hat frame and 750 for a flat, according to a blog post from embroidery equipment manufacturer ColDesi. Intricate details and small lettering may require even slower speeds.

SPOTLIGHT:

Inventory Staging

The Embroidery Coach Joyce Jagger helped Logo Linda implement a better system of logging in and staging embroidery jobs. Here are three tips to improve your inbound inventory:

- 1. Open boxes immediately.** Double-check that the apparel supplier has sent the correct number, sizes and colors of the garments you ordered. You don’t want to delay production trying to correct mistakes at the last minute, or lose money sewing on the wrong items.
- 2. Consider staging jobs by a numeric system.** If you stage everything by due date, “You’re playing musical chairs with your boxes all the time,” says Marshall Atkinson, chief operating officer of Milwaukee-based Visual Impressions. His shop assigns jobs a six-digit work order, sorting them by the last number in the order.
- 3. Plan ahead.** Linda Gadwood and her husband, Terry, like to get an early start. They thread their machines and lay everything out for the next day’s jobs before heading home each evening. “That way, you can walk in and open up and start your orders right away,” she says.

ness and instead asked what Gadwood did to make the company’s logo look so much better – better even than the stitch file that had been created by a larger decorating rival. “I never thought I’d hear that,” Gadwood says. “I told her that it was our regular process.”

This is only the beginning of Logo Linda’s success story, Jagger says. The next

step in The Embroidery Coach’s overhaul agenda is creating a marketing plan to draw in new customers. “She’s getting so much more work out in a month’s time that she’s got capacity to put out more,” Jagger says.

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