

Data Shows:

# Custom Sells



The Guide to Understanding Data Insights and Customer  
Preferences in Custom Apparel Decoration



## Table of Contents Page

**MILLCRAFT**  
APPAREL SOLUTIONS

- » Introduction
- » Why We Made This Guide
- » Data Shows: Case Studies
- » Trends and Opportunities
- » Millcraft: One Stop Shop
- » Next Steps





Hi, We're  
**Millcraft**

Millcraft is a time-honored, legacy company with more than 100 years of experience in the print market. We're rooted in a simple philosophy: honor the customer relationship.

As our customers' needs evolve, Millcraft continues to diversify and grow as a vibrant company, adding to our resources and infrastructure to best help our customers. With specialists in nearly every aspect of the supply chain, we've been able to amass experience and hire industry experts to provide solutions within:

- » Paper
- » Wide Format Printing
- » Apparel
- » Craft Beverage

**Millcraft is well positioned to support our customers and guide you through growing and diversifying your businesses.** We believe in innovation and evolution, and we're committed to fresh solutions for clients and implementing new technologies.

True to our founding philosophy, we honor the customer relationship. Our Millcraft team operates as an extension of your business, and we are proud to be known as a valued partner to your print shop. When you have questions, we have answers...**Just ask.**



# Why We Made This Guide

## YOUR SUCCESS IS OUR PASSION

With more than 100 years of experience in the printing industry and our team of experts in the apparel solutions industry, Millcraft created this guide with one purpose in mind: to help you succeed in your commercial print business.

New growth opportunities are key to your success. **Custom apparel decoration with data-driven insights into customer preferences affords the prospect of lucrative growth for today's print shops.**

### Rising Apparel Opportunity

The custom apparel decoration industry is experiencing rapid growth driven by increasing consumer demand for personalized and unique products, and print-on-demand is considered one of the fastest growing trends in the industry, predicted to reach \$39.87 billion by 2030 from just \$4.91 billion in 2021.

Fueled by advancements in digital printing technologies and consumers' desire for customized, one-of-a-kind designs that reflect their individual tastes and preferences, **custom apparel has become a clear path to profit for print shops—and not just any print shops, but those that know how to use data insights to guide growth.**

36% of consumers are more interested in buying custom apparel than non-personalized options.

— Deloitte Consumer Review

# Why We Made This Guide Continued...

## Crucial Customer Preferences

Data allows better understanding of customer preferences in custom apparel—crucial because consumer choices, from design elements to printing methods, directly influence purchasing decisions. For example, personalized designs, preferred colors, and eco-friendly materials are often key drivers behind a customer's selection of custom apparel.

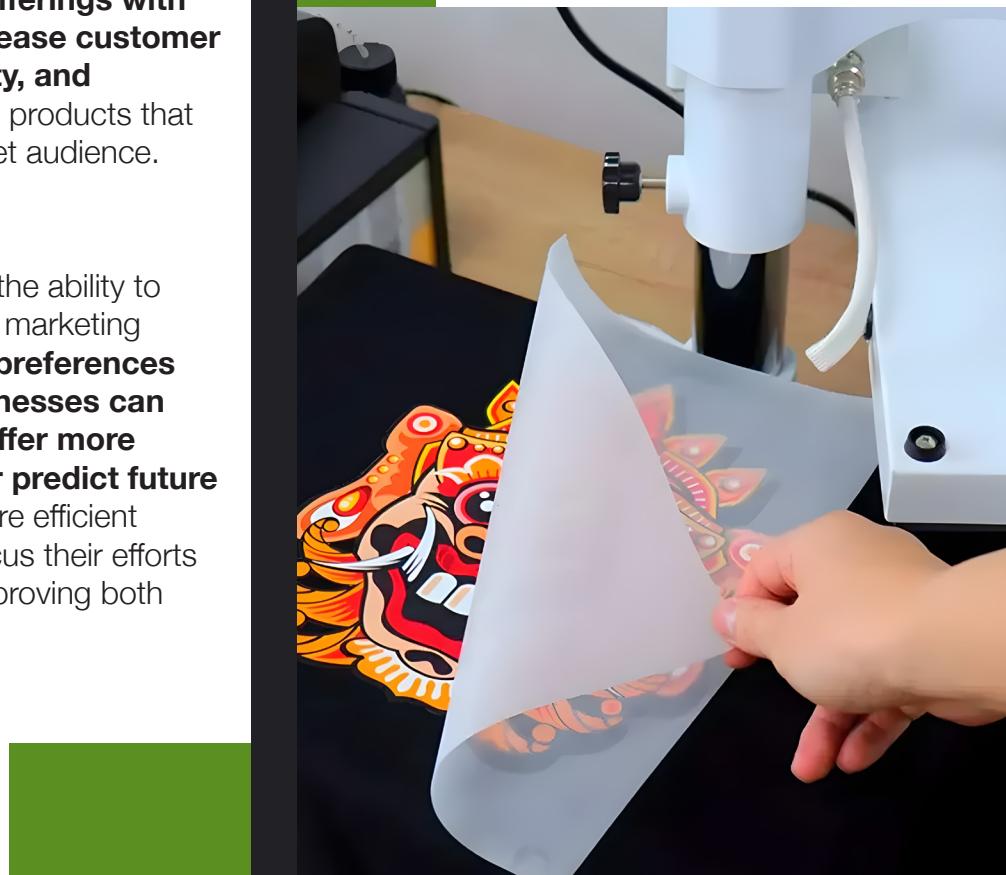
**Print businesses that align their offerings with data-proven preferences can increase customer satisfaction, enhance brand loyalty, and ultimately boost sales** by delivering products that are known to resonate with their target audience.

## Data-Driven Insights

Data-driven insights give print shops the ability to tailor both their product offerings and marketing strategies. **By analyzing customer preferences and purchase patterns, print businesses can optimize production processes, offer more personalized products, and better predict future trends.** Data insights also enable more efficient marketing, allowing businesses to focus their efforts on the most promising segments, improving both customer retention and acquisition.

The global custom t-shirt printing market is projected to grow from \$4.3 billion in 2021 to \$20 billion by 2033.

*– Fortune Business Insights*



Custom apparel products yield profit margins of 50-60% – significantly higher than traditional paper printing.

*– Printful Insights*

# Data Shows: Now is the time to seize the moment and capture first-mover advantage in the apparel personalization revolution.

With consumer demand for personalization rising rapidly, and technological advancements in digital printing, direct-to-garment (DTG), and direct-to-film (DTF) making it easier for print shops to offer high-quality, customizable apparel in small batches—now is the ideal time for commercial print shops to diversify its apparel services, **tap into the rapidly expanding sector, and boost revenue by offering personalized, data-proven products.**

89% of buyers are more likely to make a purchase when multiple services are integrated, ensuring their needs are fully met without seeking additional vendors.

- Thinkific

## Benefits of Diversification



### One-Stop Solution

Customers prefer working with vendors that can fulfill multiple needs in one place. Offering both print and apparel solutions—and multiple apparel decoration options such as screen printing, direct-to-garment (DTG), direct-to-film (DTF)—**allows commercial print businesses to cater to a broader range of customer needs.** This versatility enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty.



### Increased Revenue Streams

Adding custom apparel expands a print shop's range of products and services, **opening up new revenue streams by appealing to different market segments** including corporate clients, fashion-forward consumers, and eco-conscious shoppers looking for specific methods and materials. By analyzing data insight and offering items that are proven to be popular such as t-shirts, hoodies, and caps, diversifying with apparel increases sales opportunities.



### Increased Customer Retention

Apparel items, especially those linked to company branding or promotional efforts, can encourage repeat business and create long-term customer relationships. This expanded service **helps ensure that customers return, not just for printing, but for ongoing apparel and promotional product needs** as well.

# Vistaprint

## INTRODUCING CUSTOM APPAREL:

### Case Study: Vistaprint's Expansion into Custom Apparel

Vistaprint, initially a global leader in printing business cards, marketing materials, and signage, diversified into the custom apparel market. By offering personalized t-shirts, hoodies, and other apparel items, **Vistaprint successfully leveraged data insights to identify growing demand in the custom apparel industry and broaden its market presence.**

#### Diversification Strategy

Vistaprint began offering various custom apparel decoration techniques, such as DTG and DTF, allowing them to **cater to diverse customer segments—from small businesses needing branded uniforms to individuals seeking personalized gifts.**

Utilizing data from customer purchase behavior and preferences, Vistaprint adjusted its inventory to meet high demand for specific products like custom t-shirts and polos. This allowed them to offer a more tailored product range based on real-time insights into customer trends.

#### Impact on Market Presence and Growth

The introduction of custom apparel helped Vistaprint expand beyond print media and become a more comprehensive one-stop shop. This diversification into apparel services allowed Vistaprint to capture a share of the burgeoning custom clothing market, which contributed to its growing revenue. In 2020, custom apparel accounted for a **17% increase in Vistaprint's total sales, with the apparel segment consistently growing faster than its traditional print services.**

#### Customer Satisfaction and Profit

Vistaprint reported improved customer satisfaction and a **24% increase in repeat customers** due to their diverse product catalog, which included popular custom apparel options. Data-driven insights helped the company optimize production, leading to quicker turnaround times and improved customer loyalty. The apparel segment, specifically custom t-shirts and branded business apparel, also led to a 12% boost in profit margins by enhancing Vistaprint's average order value.



#### Key Takeaway

Vistaprint's successful diversification into custom apparel shows how **data insights and an expanded product offering can increase market share, customer satisfaction, and profitability.** By tailoring their offerings to meet specific consumer demands, they tapped into a lucrative market that continues to drive growth.

# Custom Ink

## EXPANDING CUSTOM APPAREL:

### Case Study: Custom Ink's Success in Expanding Beyond T-Shirts

Initially founded as an online platform for custom t-shirts, Custom Ink **successfully expanded its business into a wide range of custom apparel, including hats, hoodies, bags, and accessories**. By using data-driven insights and customer feedback, Custom Ink optimized its product offerings and marketing strategies, resulting in enhanced brand loyalty and increased profitability.

#### Diversification Strategy

Custom Ink diversified its apparel options by adding screen printing, embroidery, and DTG printing to its service offerings. **With data insights, they identified high-demand products and trends in the custom apparel market**, allowing them to stay ahead of competitors. Custom Ink further expanded by introducing group orders and bulk pricing for corporate clients, events, and sports teams, appealing to both individual and large-scale buyers.

#### Impact on Market Presence and Growth

The expansion into a broader range of apparel items and decoration techniques helped Custom Ink grow significantly in market presence. Their focus on quality and personalized customer experiences helped them secure contracts with larger clients and create brand ambassadors among smaller groups. By 2021, Custom Ink had grown to serve over **200,000 group orders annually**, contributing to a **20% year-over-year revenue growth**, largely driven by their custom apparel services.

#### Customer Satisfaction and Profit

Custom Ink's expansion from t-shirts to a wide range of custom apparel helped boost customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Their use of data to analyze customer preferences allowed for better-targeted marketing campaigns and product recommendations, resulting in a **15% increase in repeat customer orders**. Custom Ink also reported an increase in average order size due to their diversified offerings, leading to a **25% increase in profitability** from their apparel services.



#### Key Takeaway

Custom Ink's success demonstrates how **expanding custom apparel services, supported by data-driven insights can elevate market position, customer satisfaction, and profits**. Their strategy of offering multiple decoration options while focusing on personalization helped them thrive in a competitive market.



## Billion Dollar Growth in Apparel Printings

Rising from \$3.64 billion in 2020 to a projected **\$7.57 billion by 2028**, with a compound CAGR of **9.7%**, the global custom apparel printing market and demand for custom apparel is surging—and driven by consumers' growing interest in personalized, eco-friendly, and unique designs.

Market trends include a heightened preference for sustainable materials, with **60% of consumers** indicating they prefer eco-friendly apparel options, and a strong demand for rapid turnaround times, especially as digital printing technologies advance.

## Key Growth Factors

Key growth drivers in the custom apparel market include advancements in printing technology, such as direct-to-garment (DTG) and direct-to-film (DTF), which enable faster, more cost-effective production of personalized apparel. The rise of e-commerce platforms and the influence of social media on fashion trends have further accelerated market expansion, with consumers increasingly seeking unique, on-demand designs driven by viral fashion content and online shopping convenience.



### Social Media

Social media's influence on fashion trends has been substantial, with 72% of consumers reporting that their fashion purchasing decisions are influenced by Instagram posts and other social media content. This has accelerated the demand for unique, on-demand designs as consumers seek to emulate viral fashion trends seen online.



### E-Commerce

E-commerce platforms have experienced significant growth, with global sales reaching \$5.7 trillion in 2022, accounting for approximately 19.7% of total retail sales. This surge reflects the increasing reliance on digital platforms for shopping and the expanding reach of online businesses.



## Trending Customer Preferences

Alongside personalization and customization as top-ranking, here are three key customer preferences in custom apparel decoration for 2024.

### » **Sustainability**

There is a growing demand for eco-friendly and sustainable apparel. Consumers are prioritizing garments made from organic, recycled materials and using environmentally conscious production methods, such as water-based inks and energy-efficient equipment. Brands that embrace sustainability are more appealing to today's environmentally conscious consumer

- **49% of global consumers** state they have purchased at least one sustainable product in the past four weeks, reflecting a growing preference for eco-friendly options
- **64% of consumers** stated they are willing to pay more for sustainable fashion, indicating a strong market preference for eco-friendly options that have a lower environmental impact

### » **On-Demand and Small-Batch Production**

The ability to produce **customized small-batch apparel, and sometimes even single items or “quantity of one”**, is gaining popularity. Direct-to-film (DTF) and direct-to-garment (DTG) digital printing technologies make it possible to efficiently produce personalized items in small quantities without compromising on quality.

### » **Collaborations and Limited-Edition Releases**

Brands are increasingly collaborating with artists, influencers, and designers to produce limited-edition collections. These partnerships create unique, collectible apparel that appeals to niche audiences and generates buzz around the brand. In fact, **62% of Gen Z and Millennials have shown increased interest in purchasing products from limited-edition collaborations**, especially when promoted through social media, underscoring the powerful influence of such partnerships on consumer behavior.



# Millcraft: Your One Stop Shop for Custom Apparel Success

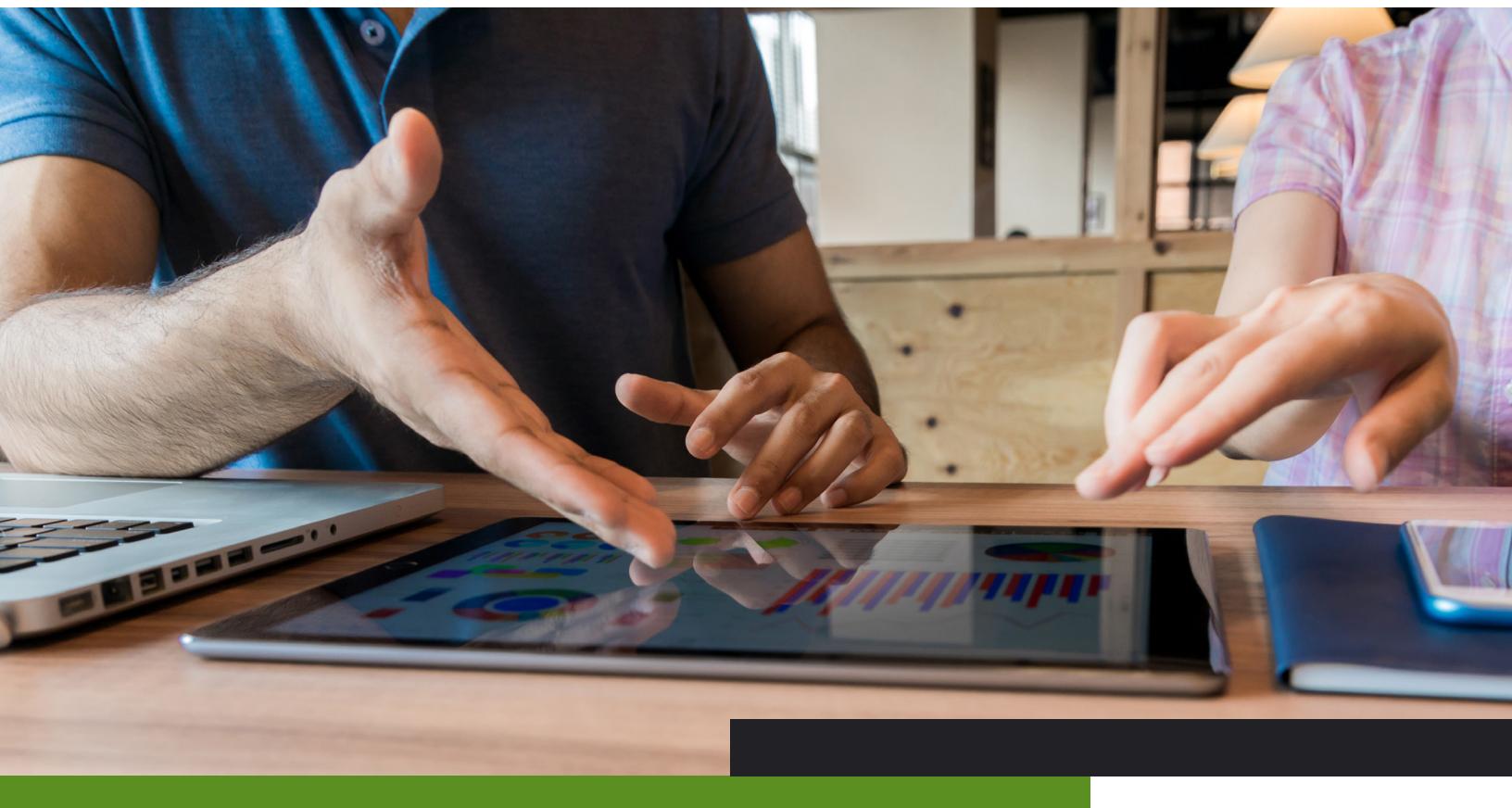


Bring in Millcraft's experience and trusted expertise to guide the launch or expansion of your lucrative custom apparel vertical—and for every data-driven detail of your print business success.

When you have questions, we have answers...  
Just ask.

1 in 5 shoppers are willing to pay a 20% premium for personalized apparel.

- Thinkific



## Evaluating Your Shop's Readiness

With consumer demand for personalization rising rapidly, and technological advancements in digital printing making it easier for print shops to offer high-quality, customizable apparel in small batches, the question becomes: **Is your print shop ready to expand or diversify its apparel services and boost revenue by offering personalized, data-proven products?**

Before expanding into this fast-growing market, you'll need to evaluate your **business infrastructure** to ensure your print shop can meet demand and maintain quality. This involves assessing equipment (such as DTG and DTF printers) and investment, ensuring software systems are capable of handling design customization and order management, and reviewing production capacity to determine if they can scale up for small-batch orders. Additionally, evaluating **staff expertise** is crucial, as teams need the skills to manage new technologies and meet customer expectations for personalized products.

Introducing new printing methods requires **streamlined workflows** to ensure efficient production and minimize errors. A well-organized workflow reduces bottlenecks, ensuring smooth integration of new technologies, faster turnaround times, and consistent output quality. Equally important to consider is **staff training**, as employees need to be proficient with new machinery and software to produce high-quality custom apparel. Investing in training enhances team efficiency.

Finally, **gathering customer feedback** is crucial for understanding whether your business is ready to expand into custom apparel services. Feedback can highlight specific demands, such as preferred apparel types or particular printing methods, ensuring that your investment in apparel expansion aligns with customer preferences and maximizes profitability. Customer input provides valuable insights into the types of products and services that will resonate most with your target market.

# Choosing the Right Print Method: DTG vs. DTF

Millcraft recognizes that many commercial print shops want to grow another vertical, and may even be interested in adding apparel and bulking their product catalog, but they aren't sure which is right for their business: **DTF or DTG? The answer is—it depends on your specific print shop and business goals.**

## DTF: Direct-to-Film

Direct-to-film, DTF, is a process in which a graphic printed onto a piece of film with various colored inks is applied to an apparel item. This pre-printed film is binded to the garment through heat and pressure. DTF involves low-temperature transferring, and thereby the process allows printers to work on more sensitive materials, from spandex and silk to jersey material, fleece, neoprene, and beyond.

**DTF is sought after because of its ability to print on nearly any substrate, and it's most ideal for larger, 50- and 100-piece orders at a time.** This method allows printers to optimize the use of resources by grouping multiple projects together, reducing setup time and material waste. By running different designs simultaneously, printers can achieve economies of scale and deliver high-quality prints at a lower cost per unit.

## DTG: Direct-to-Garment

Direct-to-garment (DTG) is a printing method where digital designs are directly applied to fabric using specialized inkjet printers. This process allows for high-quality, full-color prints with intricate detail and precision. DTG printers apply the ink directly onto the garment's surface, where it is absorbed by the fabric, creating vibrant and durable designs.

**DTG is particularly suited for short runs and one-off custom apparel orders due to its ability to print designs on demand without the need for screens or extensive setup.** This makes it an ideal choice for businesses offering personalized or low-quantity orders. It works best with cotton and cotton-blend fabrics, but advancements in technology allow it to perform well on a variety of materials, including polyester and tri-blends. The process delivers soft, breathable prints and is especially valued for its ability to reproduce photographic-quality images with fine detail and color gradients.

**DTG:** Small, on-demand orders with high customization

**DTF:** Nearly any substrate, bulk orders with diverse design needs



# Millcraft: Your Partner in Apparel Printing Success

The Millcraft team has an unprecedented level of experience and expertise to help your business grow apparel solutions with DTF and DTG, and beyond. We not only introduce you to new technology, but we walk you through your best buying decisions based on what you need, and show you how to operate your business with this new technology.



## Leverage Data For Future Growth

The custom apparel decoration market will continue to grow, shaped by technological advancements in digital printing alongside AI-powered resources and sustainable printing methods. Print businesses will be able to further use data analytics to make informed decisions about customer preferences, optimize production efficiency, and enhance marketing efforts.

**By tracking purchasing behaviors, color trends, and design preferences, companies can tailor their offerings to meet market demand**, leading to improved customer satisfaction and retention. Additionally, data can reveal areas where production workflows can be streamlined, allowing for cost savings and more accurate demand forecasting.

## Millcraft Apparel Solutions

Millcraft Apparel Solutions is where direct-to-garment (DTG) and direct-to-film (DTF) equipment, inks, software, installation, and support all meet—under one umbrella in a true one-stop shop—so print businesses can easily decorate apparel, textiles, and merchandise at quicker speeds and with higher quality prints.

- » **High-Quality Substrates:** Millcraft offers a wide range of premium paper stocks and textile substrates, including eco-friendly options, perfect for both custom apparel printing and packaging needs.

# How Millcraft Supports Continued...

- » **Direct-to-Garment (DTG):** Advanced DTG printers that allow businesses to print vibrant, detailed designs directly onto cotton and cotton-blend fabrics, ideal for short runs and on-demand customization ; inks, maintenance, parts, and platens.
- » **Direct-to-Film (DTF):** Cutting-edge equipment and heat-transfer films designed for durability and versatility, allowing for custom designs on various fabrics such as polyester, spandex, and fleece ; maintenance products and powder.
- » **Heat Presses:** The best in reliable heat press machines and equipment options, offering versatility for custom apparel projects; caddies, curing paper, platens.

## How Millcraft Supports

With pre-treatment machines and software, equipment and substrates—whether you're new or seasoned in apparel decorating, Millcraft provides what custom apparel printers need. Our apparel products and solutions are designed to help print businesses meet the growing demand for personalization and quality, while leveraging innovative technology and sustainable practices.

**From equipping customers with an optimal workflow to expertly calculated ROI, Millcraft has the capacity and experience to help you create and operate your print business more successfully** with this new technology. We develop relationships with our customers, and our team is here to assist with installation, training, and support.





## Data Shows: Custom Sells

Fueled by advancements in digital printing technologies and consumers' desire for customized, one-of-a-kind designs that reflect their individual tastes and preferences, custom apparel has become a clear path to profit for print shops—and not just any print shops, but those that know how to use data insights to guide growth.

The custom apparel industry is evolving rapidly, and print businesses that embrace change and invest in innovation are well-positioned for future growth. Whether through adopting new print technologies, enhancing customer personalization, or making data-driven decisions, the path to success is clear: **Now is the time to seize the opportunities that custom apparel and data insights provide, ensuring your business stays at the forefront of the industry.**

Bring in Millcraft's experience and trusted expertise to guide the launch or expansion of your lucrative custom apparel vertical, and for every data-driven detail of your print business success.



**MILLCRAFT**  
APPAREL SOLUTIONS

Get Started Today

800.860.2482  
justask@millcraft.com  
www.millcraft.com