



## This Conference Rises to the Challenge

*The Chairman of SGIA's Apparel Decorators Committee on why he's going to THREADX (and why you should too)*

The apparel decorating industry is full of “how-to” conferences. While they're certainly valuable, they're focused on nuts and bolts of the business, not the big picture. But at SGIA's THREADX, we can immerse ourselves in our industry and our culture, in a conference designed by and for apparel decorators, with our ideas and our attitudes at its heart.

We apparel decorators are in it for the adventure. Decorating is what we do. THREADX is about the big picture — branding, marketing, data, culture, business development and leading the crowd — the things that make our life's work exciting, interesting and fun. We attend THREADX to rise to the challenge.

SGIA's THREADX conference, now in its third year, looks at the environment surrounding the business of apparel decorating, exploring concepts like these:

- The future of our businesses comes down to shared experiences. Sometimes those experiences are

more important to customers than our products and services.

- Technology continues to change, and processes and logistics that might have taken months a decade ago take only hours or even minutes today. This is a world of next-day delivery, big data at our fingertips and instant wire transfers; we can reach thousands of people in seconds. Business has adapted rapidly to this fast-paced, automated, virtual world — and must continue to do so. To best serve our customers, we must focus on their behavior.
- Automation is exciting for some, frightening to others. While it's proliferating rapidly, not all work can be automated. For example, it is difficult to replace those whose work involves managing people or requires creativity — the very nature of our businesses.

*THREADX is about the big picture — branding, marketing, data, culture, business development and leading the crowd — the things that make our life's work exciting, interesting and fun.*



By Lon R. Winters, President, Graphic Elephants; Chairman, SGIA Apparel Decorators Committee



The very exercise of connecting with similar, but diverse, business influencers and peers can inject growth into your business and increase opportunity.

- Is the future of business connected to the future of technology?
- While we have to prepare for complex operations, we also need to be mindful of our corporate social responsibility and improving our society.
- Entrepreneurial education is growing, and as a result, business is more diverse than ever. However, business owners still need training in the skills necessary for success in an increasingly complex marketplace.

and expectations that are validated by customers' experiences. Our brand isn't what we say it is: It's what "they" say it is.

We are all busy as we focus on the daily operations of our businesses, but it's important to entertain alternative perspectives. The very exercise of connecting with similar, but diverse, business influencers and peers can inject growth into your business and increase opportunity.

We live in a time of rapid change. The challenge to cultivate strong networks in business today is more important than ever. There is incredible value in being able to tap into the collective experience of trusted peers. Beyond widening our social circles, strong networks foster deeper learning and broaden our exposure. Our networks make us smarter, more knowledgeable and grounded — and businesspeople who ignore networking do so at their own peril.

The first networking opportunity is the Welcome Reception. Drinks, small bites and games by the pool. (I imagine some competitive cornhole will be appropriate.) Attendees, presenters and sponsors will all be there on Sunday, February 23. It's a great way to meet and greet our peers.

Before the Welcome Reception, spend a little time with Aaron Draplin, Owner and Founder of Draplin Design, whose keynote at THREADX 2019 was wildly popular. Draplin's Sunday afternoon workshop, "Things No One Talks About in Graphic Design" (extra fee required), picks up where he left off and will cover

THREADX 2018 (Palm Springs, Calif.) and 2019 (San Diego) generated mountains of ideas and networking opportunities. It was tremendous to be part of lively discussions from a multitude of perspectives. THREADX 2020 will be at the Saguaro Hotel in Scottsdale, Ariz., February 23 - 25, 2020. (I can think of worse places to be in February!)

"THREADX is not a 'how to' conference. It is a 'what if' conference," I overheard a couple of attendees remark. I'd add, "THREADX is about countless possibilities!"

I've found THREADX's lessons on branding to be critical for my business. With appearances by marketing superstar riCardo Crespo (Th13teen) as a keynote speaker (2018) and master of ceremonies (2019), we learned how brands demonstrate their exceptionalism, and how a brand is the sum of perceptions



a variety of topics including taxes, efficiencies in Adobe Illustrator, lessons learned, changing tactics and how to effectively accommodate your clients.

Back to networking ... On Monday night, there's an extra event (we gotta eat, right?) — Beer & Brats — at Brat Haus, nestled in the heart of Old Town Scottsdale. Brat Haus features Arizona's most welcoming beer garden and 28 craft beers on tap. The menu features made-from-scratch cuisine inspired by European food craftsmen, including a variety of brats, burgers, salads and sides. There's an extra fee associated with this event.

There's no doubt about it: Ours is a creative industry. To keep up with the creativity of the industry and the caliber of the attendees, the agenda is filled with presentations from incredibly talented people.

This year's keynote addresses are exceptional and highly relevant.

We'll open with "Hug Your Haters: How to Embrace Complaints and Keep Your Customers" by Jay Baer, Founder, Convince & Convert. Baer says haters aren't your problem — ignoring them is. If it feels like there are more complaints than ever, and that you're spending more time and money dealing with negativity and backlash, you're right. But the rise of customer complaints is also an enormous opportunity. Baer will teach us the critical steps necessary to retain and delight — now that customer service is a spectator sport.

Our closing keynote, "Raving Fans," comes from Scott Wozniak, CEO at Swoz Leadership. His premise is that even in commodity markets, some companies stand out because they have raving fans — not just satisfied, price-driven customers. This is a how-to talk, with real examples and practical tools explained.

The full conference agenda is on page 20. Learning outcomes are at the core of THREADX, and attending will help us acquire knowledge as we learn from the attendees, sponsors and speakers' stories and experiences.

Besides attending THREADX to be inspired by the presentations (and I'm sure you will be inspired!), our community's will to learn and improve will generate even more "bang for the buck." Surrounding yourself with passionate people will motivate you to keep learning and growing.

If we want to succeed, it is vital to adapt to the rapidly changing world; we need to be smart enough to detect the changes and flexible enough to react to them. THREADX will give us a taste of this and is the perfect opportunity to put together leisure and learning.

By investing in THREADX 2020, we will increase our visibility with apparel decorators from across the country, establish more relationships with key influencers, and connect with new and old friends face-to-face. Registration is open now at [THREADXConference.com](http://THREADXConference.com)! (Remember to also sign up for the special events!)

I look forward to seeing you there. Your presence contributes to its great success. Your enthusiasm and positivity will help make our time together productive and fun. We certainly expect to bring together leaders in our industry for the exchange of ideas in an open dialogue. The social activities and networking opportunities are plenty, not to mention the dynamic speaker lineup. They will provide unique insight and actionable tools, models and methods to use in our own businesses. I'd also like to thank this year's sponsors: Epson, OmniPrint International Inc., SanMar (Diamond); Bella + Canvas, JERZEES (Platinum); BBC Industries Inc., Chromaline and SAATI (Supporting). See you in Scottsdale!

*At the age of 21, Lon R. Winters was the Production Manager for Ocean Pacific. His companies have won more than 50 international, SGIA, industry publication and FESPA garment decorating awards and honors. Lon is the President and Founder of Colorado-based Graphic Elephants, an international consulting firm and apparel decoration studio specializing in screen printing technical advances, plant design, layout, troubleshooting, productivity, quality analysis and complete apparel decorating solutions. He was inducted into the Academy of Screen and Digital Printing Technologies in 2013 and is the Chairman of SGIA's Apparel Decorators Committee. Learn more at [graphicelephants.com](http://graphicelephants.com).*



**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2020**

1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Things No One Talks About in Graphic Design with Aaron Draplin, Draplin Design Co.\*

4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Welcome Reception

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2020**

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Breakfast

9:00 a.m. - 9:05 a.m. Morning Remarks

9:05 a.m. - 10:05 a.m. Hug Your Haters: How to Embrace Complaints and Keep Your Customers – Jay Baer, Convince & Convert

10:15 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. 10 Ways to Avoid a Lawsuit, from a Business Trial Lawyer’s Perspective – Kelly Curnutt, Curnutt & Hafer L.L.P

10:15 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. SGIA Town Hall with Christopher Bernat, Vapor Apparel; Justin Lawrence, Oklahoma Shirt Company; Lon Winters, Graphic Elephants

10:45 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. Morning Break

11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. A Virtuous Culture – Pete Lovelace, Booster Spirit Wear

12:15 p.m. - 12:25 p.m. Sponsor Presentation – SANMAR

12:25 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Lunch

1:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Moderated Discussion: Innovations in the Industry – Brett Bowden, Printed Threads; Tom Davenport, Motion Textile; Lon Winters, Graphic Elephants

1:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Moderated Discussion: Business Challenges You Currently Face – Christopher Bernat, Vapor Apparel; Ted Pidcock, Chillybears

2:10 p.m. - 3:10 p.m. Panel Discussion: Subscription Models – Austin Crossley, Red Tuna Shirt Club; Justin Lawrence, Oklahoma Shirt Company; Joel Lewis, Merch by Amazon

3:10 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Closing Remarks

5 p.m. - 7 p.m. Beer & Brats at Brat Haus\*

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2020**

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Breakfast

9:00 a.m. - 9:05 a.m. Morning Remarks

9:05 a.m. - 9:50 a.m. Moneyball Screen Printing – Michelle Moxley, The M&R Companies

9:50 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Tuning Data into Dollars – Ben Robinson, Stahls’ Hotronix

10:15 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. Featured Speakers – Ben Robinson, Stahls’ Hotronix; Michelle Moxley, The M&R Companies

10:45 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. Morning Break

11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Screen to Sale: Five Strategies to Grow Your Business in 2020 With the Power of Video Marketing – Jason Rink, Simplifilm

12:15 p.m. - 12:25 p.m. Sponsor Presentation – EPSON

12:25 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Lunch

1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. Raving Fans – Scott Wozniak, Swoz Leadership

2:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Closing Remarks & Conference Recap

Register and book your THREADX accommodations at [threadxconference.com](http://threadxconference.com)

\*Requires separate fee and registration