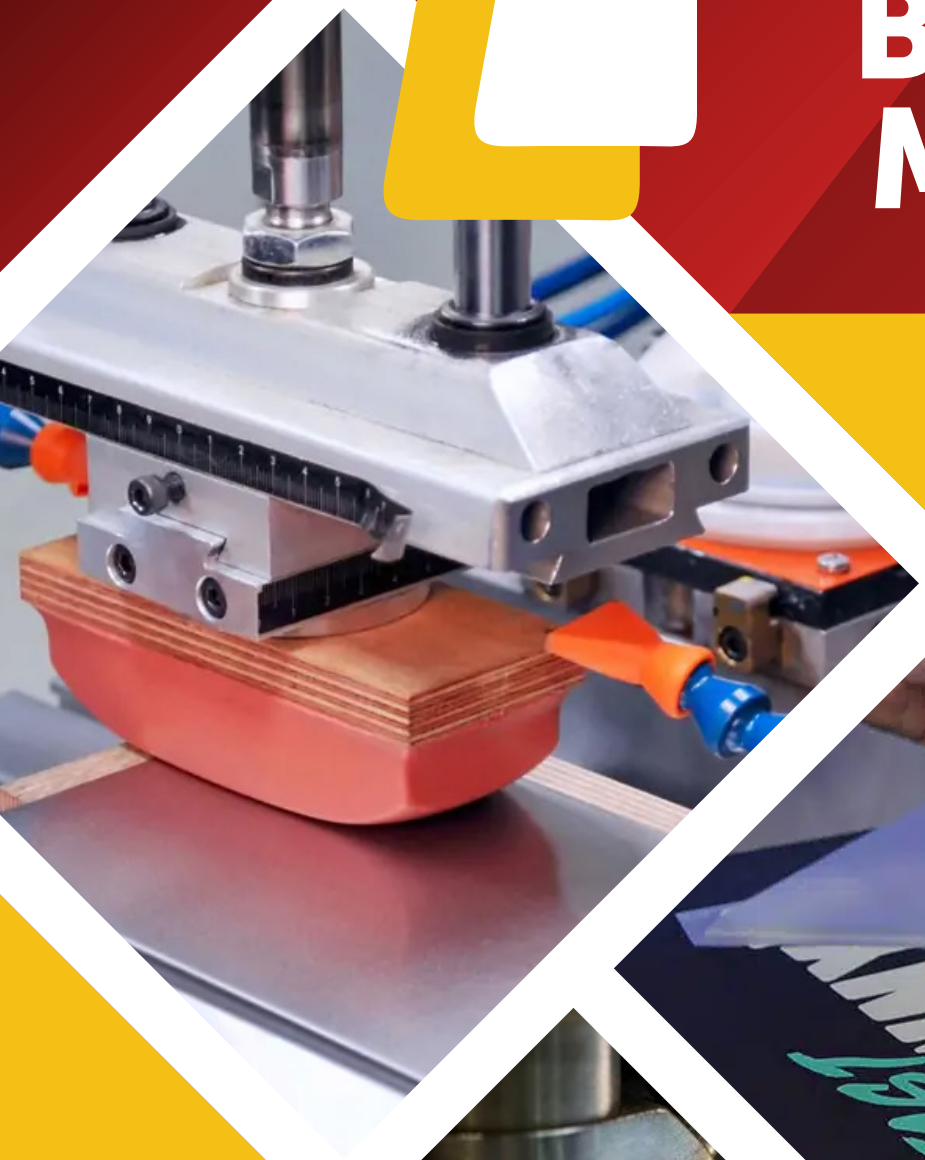
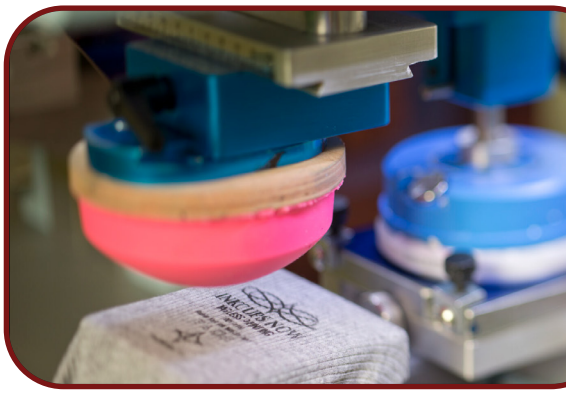
Handy Imprints

A Guide to Branding Methods



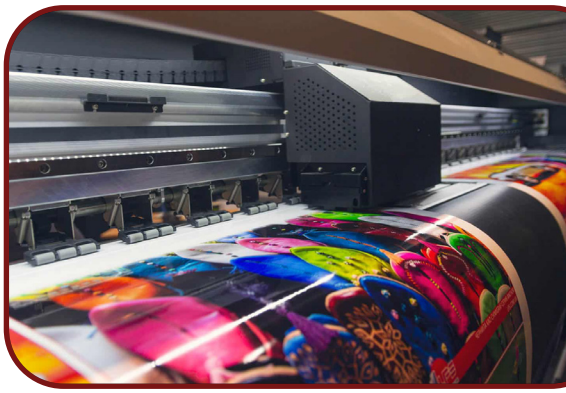
In this guide, we will explore the technical processes behind various branding methods. Each method involves distinct techniques that influence the final result, making it crucial to select the appropriate method for your chosen material and design.

1. Pad Printing



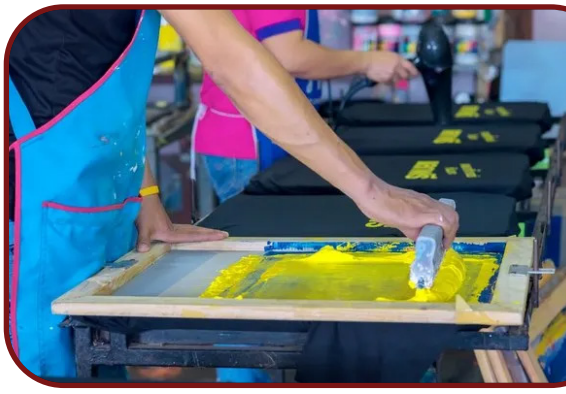
Pad printing is a versatile process that utilises a silicone pad to transfer ink from an engraved metal plate (known as a cliché) onto an item's surface. The engraved plate holds the ink, which is then transferred by the flexible pad. The pad's ability to deform allows it to adapt to curved, uneven, or textured surfaces, ensuring clear and consistent results. Pad printing is especially effective for small, intricate designs and is frequently used on promotional products such as pens, keyrings, and novelty items.

2. Full Colour Digital Printing



Full colour digital printing employs advanced inkjet technology that sprays liquid ink directly onto the product's surface. The ink is then cured immediately by UV light, ensuring it bonds securely to the material. This process allows for complex designs, photo-quality images, and vibrant colour gradients. Digital printing is best suited for flat or lightly curved surfaces, making it ideal for drinkware, power banks, and promotional tech accessories.

3. Screenprinting



Screenprinting involves creating a stencil (or screen) coated with a light-sensitive emulsion. After exposure to UV light, the unexposed portions of the emulsion are washed away, leaving an open mesh area that forms the design. Ink is pushed through the stencil onto the product's surface using a squeegee. Each colour requires a separate screen, making screenprinting ideal for bold, solid-colour designs on textiles, tote bags, and banners.

4. Digital Transfers

Digital transfer printing involves digitally printing a design onto a special transfer paper, which is then applied to the product using a heat press. The heat activates an adhesive layer that bonds the design to the product's surface. Digital transfers are ideal for complex, multi-colour designs or garments with intricate details. This method is commonly used on clothing, caps, and sportswear due to its ability to achieve precise and vibrant results.

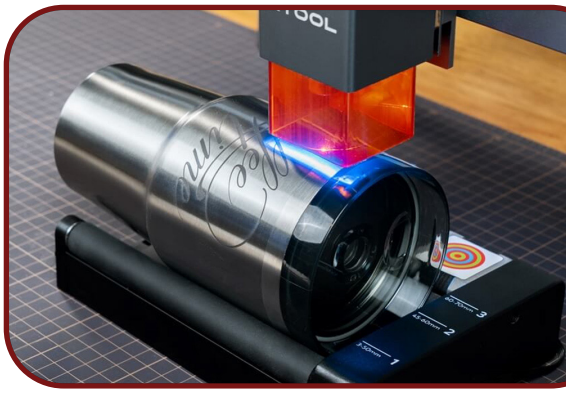
5. Supacolour

Supacolour is a hybrid heat transfer method that combines digital printing with screenprint inks. The design is digitally printed onto a transfer sheet, which is then precisely cut to shape. Using a heat press, the transfer is applied to the garment with controlled pressure and temperature. This technique ensures bright colours, sharp details, and excellent durability, making it ideal for apparel, fabric bags, and soft textiles.

6. Sublimation

Sublimation printing is a unique process where solid dye ink is converted directly into a gas without becoming liquid. The design is first printed onto transfer paper using sublimation ink. When exposed to heat and pressure, the ink turns into a gas and permeates polyester fibres, bonding directly to the material. Sublimation produces vibrant, long-lasting designs that resist cracking, peeling, or fading. It is most effective on white or light-coloured polyester textiles and polymer-coated products like mugs.

7. Engraving



Engraving uses a concentrated laser beam to burn away the surface layer of metal, glass, wood, or some plastics. The laser follows a pre-programmed path to ensure precision, leaving a clean and permanent mark. Alternatively, rotary engraving employs a spinning cutting tool to carve into the material's surface. Engraving is ideal for achieving high-precision designs, particularly for awards, plaques, and executive gifts.

8. Embossing

Embossing is a process that uses a heated metal die to press a design into leather, paper, or card stock. Pressure and heat are applied to create a raised impression. This process enhances the tactile quality of the item. For additional visual impact, coloured foil can be incorporated to accentuate the embossed design.

9. Debossing

Debossing is the inverse of embossing. Rather than raising the design, a metal die is pressed into the surface to create a recessed imprint. This method is typically used for leather goods, notebooks, and stationery to achieve a subtle yet sophisticated finish.

10. Embroidery

Embroidery involves stitching a design directly into fabric using programmed embroidery machines. Multiple needles insert thread into the fabric following a digitised design pattern. Embroidery is highly durable, making it ideal for logos on uniforms, caps, and workwear. Additional stabilising materials are often applied to the back of the fabric to ensure the embroidered design maintains its shape over time.

11. Etching

Etching employs either acid or laser technology to create precise, frosted designs on glass or metal surfaces. Acid etching is commonly used on glass, where masked areas are protected, and exposed sections are etched away with acid. Laser etching vapourises the top surface layer of metal to create permanent, precise marks. Etching is ideal for premium awards, commemorative glassware, and luxury metal items.

12. Imitation Etching

Imitation etching replicates the frosted look of traditional etching using a fine ink spray. Designs are applied through a stencil with semi-transparent ink to mimic the subtle, etched effect. Imitation etching is faster and more cost-effective for bulk orders than acid or laser etching.

13. Foil Print

Foil printing involves the application of metallic or coloured foil to a product's surface using heat and pressure. A custom metal die, shaped to match the desired design, is heated and pressed against the foil sheet, bonding it to the surface. This method produces a reflective, luxurious finish that is commonly used on premium stationery, invitations, and packaging.

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