

# **Training A Confident Embroidery Machine Operator**

**5 Simple Steps To Training an Embroidery  
Production Employee That You  
Can Depend On!**

**Joyce Jagger**



## Introduction:

Have you said to yourself: I am running out of time in my embroidery business, and I cannot do it all myself anymore. I think that I need someone to help me with my work, but how do I start training them? Training a new production employee is not as hard as it may seem and in this book I will cover how to get started.

You know that you have more work than you can handle, but will an employee do the same quality job that I do? My reputation is on the line here and that is important. How can I be assured that they are going to be dependable? Can I start training a new person and still be able to get my work out on time? Where do I start? This can be very frustrating for the small embroidery shop owner that has always worked alone and has never had to teach anyone how to efficiently help them.

In this book, I will start with the first employee that a small embroidery shop owner should start training for the embroidery production floor. Without the proper training this new employee can end up creating a lot of mistakes which will lead to lost production. This is just as important for the small embroidery shop owner as it is to the multi-head shop that has many employees.

Learning the right process to train a new embroidery production employee is very important and helps you gain an employee that you can depend on. It is going to mean the difference between a well-run shop and one that is only mediocre. You want to make sure when you train a new production employee that everyone is on the same page so to speak.

If you are an embroidery shop owner that needs some help, this book is going to help you get started with an efficient training program.

I had my own embroidery production shop for 20 years and had 32 employees and I have been working with other embroidery business owners for the past 24 years teaching them how to train their employees and build a highly-profitable embroidery business.

I have created a full-training program that is going to cut down on the amount of time that you need to personally spend with them and put them in front of the video training program instead to get started with.

## Step 1 – Garment Finishing Process

When you hire a new employee for the production floor, the best place to start them is with the finishing process. Regardless of what you have hired them for, start them trimming, folding, and packing. It's important to teach them how to identify good embroidery from poor embroidery. Collect samples with mistakes like embroidery that's out of registration, jagged column stitches or other mistakes that have happened. They must know what excellent embroidery looks like and what bad embroidery looks like.

If a new employee cannot trim, they need to be dismissed. This is a very basic function that takes dexterity and attention to detail.

Many people feel that this part of the process is for low paying individuals that cannot do anything else. This could not be further from the truth. A trimming mistake can ruin the entire process if close attention is not paid to detail. They need to have a positive attitude, and their attitude will really show up during this process.

Learning how to remove the backing or stabilizer properly is essential. If it is not done correctly, you can easily cut a hole in the garment and the garment is ruined. [Here is a link to a video showing you the proper way to remove the backing.](#)

Next in finishing is removing the topping or Solvy from on top of the garment if it has been used. This is a water-soluble film that is used to keep the threads standing on top of the garment instead of sinking in. The most efficient way is done by steaming it with a professional upright steamer. [Here is a video showing you how the process is done.](#)

DO NOT SPRAY IT WITH WATER! This method melts the water-soluble film into the fabric and does not leave it with a professional finish. Sometimes it will all wash out after it is laundered and sometimes it won't. Do not leave it to the customer to remove it.

The finishing of your garments after you have embroidered them is very important! There is far more to finishing than just removing the backing and folding up the garment. There are many details in your Embroidery Finishing Process that if you pay close attention to; will help you raise your level of customer service.

When you are going through the finishing process there are many details and problems that you need to look out for.

- **Thread Tails**-Trim off as closely as possible but be careful not to cut off the lock knots.
- **Missing Stitches**- If you find some stitches that have been skipped and are missing, they will need to be repaired.
- **Stray Threads** - Thread that sometimes get caught during the embroidery process trail across the embroidery. Trim as closely to stitching as possible being careful not to cut off any lock knots. Gently remove with tweezers.
- **Thread Loops in the Embroidery Design** – If you see thread loops that appear in the same direct as the stitching, **DO NOT TRIM THE LOOP!** Use your fingernail to scratch the loop to the backside of the garment. Use one drop of **Fraycheck** on the back of the stitching where the loop has been scratched back. Do Not Allow **Fraycheck** to get on the garment. **ALWAYS USE FRAYCHECK ON BACK OF GARMENT – NEVER ON THE FRONT OF THE GARMENT!**
- **Is Embroidery Straight?** - If the embroidery appears slightly crooked, lay the garment flat on the trimming table. Steam the embroidery area. While embroidery is warm, lay the palm of your hand flat on top of embroidery and gently twist or turn your hand in the opposite direction that the embroidery is running. Do this a couple of times. Allow

garment to dry and check embroidery again. If embroidery is not straight, repeat the process.

- **Garment Stains** - There are various methods for spot removal depending on the type of material and type of spot. Most spots can be removed with a drop of dish soap and water.
- **Damages** - If any garment has been damaged during the embroidery or hooping process it must be removed. Do not try to pass a garment with any damage on it. The customer will be very angry. Bring it to the attention of the customer and let them decide what he or she wants to do. I will either credit the customer for the garment or replace it, but I leave that decision up to the customer.
- **Buttons Missing** - Many times buttons can be replaced if they are missing. If it is a garment that buttons down the entire front, sometimes there is an extra button at the bottom. If it is a branded button that cannot be replaced, let the customer know about it and let him decide what to do.
- **Bobbin Pull Up** - There will sometimes be bobbin thread noticeable throughout darker stitching in some logos. These stitches will need to be colored with a fine tipped permanent marker the exact shade of color as your thread. This is a very tricky process and again you need to experiment with this until you get the method perfect.

Make sure all garments are buttoned and zipped before folding and packaging. Paying attention to details in the finishing process will make a huge difference in your presentation and will show your customers that you are very interested in their business. This will definitely raise your level of customer service!

Once this employee has mastered this step, it is time to test them to make sure that they do in fact have it mastered and then move them onto the next step.

## **Step 2 - Changing Threads-Changing Needles**

Once the new person has learned the finishing process, they can then be moved into a Machine Operator's helper's position. A helper is someone that can tie new threads onto the machine, load and unload the machine, change the needles, carry work from the staging area to the machine and carry the finished work from the machine to the Finishing Dept. Their main purpose is to keep the operator focused on keeping the machine running as much as possible. The training of this new embroidery helper is important for maximizing your production.

The proper training of this helper is very important. They must be shown everything that they are supposed to do and be thoroughly trained and tested on these skills. This may seem like it is so simple that anyone should be able to do it, but they still need to be taught exactly how each step is done.

Start out by showing them where the threads are stored and how you put them onto the machine. Teach them how to do the Weavers knot so that the threads will pull right through the needle eyes. Have them do it over and over until they have it mastered. Make sure that they understand exactly how and why each step of the process is done the way it is. Do not let them go to the next step until the previous one is mastered.

*Here is a link to a video showing you how to tie the Embroidery Threads so that they will go right through the needles! It works 99% of the time. Huge time-saver!*

## **How To Change A Needle On The Embroidery Machine**

*In this embroidery training video link, **I will show you how to correctly change a needle in the embroidery machine.***

This can be a challenge to a new embroidery business owner, but it is actually a simple process. When you do change your needle, make sure that you use the *Needle Replacement Sheet* to keep track of when you changed your needle in each needle bar and what size and type of needle it is. This is a very valuable tool when you are troubleshooting problems.

If you have a multi-head machine, it is important to have a Needle Replacement Sheet for each head. Place them in a binder and place the binder under the machine table so that it is handy each time a needle is to be changed.

Pay attention to how the needles are set in the machine. Have the embroidery machine operator explain to you how they are set up. Many operators have their own way of setting them up, so half of the needles may be ball point needles and the other half may be sharp needles. That way, the machine is ready for any type of fabric that is going to be sewn on at all times.

Some Embroidery Business Owners have specific machines set up for the different types of garments so that they do not need to change the needles except on a maintenance schedule.

Make sure the machine operator explains to the helper, what size and type of needles they want put into the machine. Also make sure they pay attention to how they are putting the needles into the machine, not to touch the tip of the needle on any of the parts such as the presser foot. If they touch the tip on any other part, throw the needle away and start over. You do not want to start out with a bad needle. It can create holes in your garments.

Test them once you think they have the skills mastered in this step before going to the next step.

## Step 3- Checking Tensions - Loading & Unloading Garments

**Checking Tensions** - Teach them about tensions next. They must learn how to recognize a good tension and a bad tension. If the tension is correct, the embroidery will look tight on the top and crisp. If you turn the garment over, you should be able to see 3 dividing lines of thread on the back of the garment. The first third of thread on the left will be the color of the top thread. The next third of thread should be white bobbin thread, or whatever color of bobbin that you are using. The last third of thread should again be the top thread. If they are not equal parts showing, the operator needs to adjust the tension on either the top thread or the bobbin thread.

If you are embroidering small letters it is sometimes hard to see the division, but you still should see the line of bobbin thread. If you do not, your tension needs to be adjusted. If you are embroidering a large fill area, you will see mostly bobbin thread with a small amount of top thread showing at the edges of the segment. Keeping a total balance between the top and bobbin threads not only makes your embroidery look better, your machine will run smoother and you will have fewer problems with your machine.

**Unloading The Machine** - Teach them how to unload the machine without getting anything caught or snagged by the needles. Teach them how to remove the hoop without touching the needles. This will dull the needles. Show them how to remove the hoop from the garment as they unload the machine and place both the unhooped garments and the hoops in their correct locations.

When they remove the hoop from the machine, before they remove the hoop from the garment, teach them to turn it over to check the tension. If they see too much white bobbin thread showing on the back, the top tension on that head will need to be tightened a bit. Check with the operator to make sure that this is correct in her opinion, and she can show the helper



how to tighten the top tension thread. If there is not enough white bobbin thread showing, then the bobbin thread is too tight or the top thread is too loose. Emphasize the face that they show the operator so that she can show the helper how to adjust the bobbin tension thread.

Do not let them go to the next step until this step is mastered.

**Loading The Machine** - Next, teach them how to load the machine without getting any of the garments caught under the presser foot or trapped between the bottom of the hoop and the throat or needle plate. This is especially important when loading tubular-style machines. Show them how to run their hands under the garment to make sure that nothing is caught. Teach them not to touch the needles with the hoop as they are loading the machine. This will dull the needles.

These are basic skills that need to be mastered by everyone on the production floor. This includes the trimmers, hoopers, packers, steamers, as well as the machine operators. This helps everyone to know what the whole process is and also gives you skilled people to use if you need to pull them from another position to help out temporarily.

Test them to make sure they have mastered these skills before moving on to the next Step!

## **Step 4 – Programming The Machine -Keeping Track of Production Runs**

Once they get to this point, they have accomplished a lot in their training and learning new embroidery helper skills.

Now it is time to learn how to program the machine. This is also known as the Control Panel on any embroidery machine. Some machines are connected to the computer, and are programmed directly from the

computer, and some machines are programmed from a USB device. The design was saved from the computer onto the USB device and then carried to the machine and plugged in.

Regardless of how it is done, there are some basics that need to be learned and paid close attention to.

- It is very important to go through the entire Control Panel and learn all of the functions of each button.
- Write down each one of these functions along with the settings so that they know what each one is and the purpose of it.
- Each embroidery machine is different, even the same brands, have different models and each one is different.
- Have the superior, or machine operator, explain to the helper how that particular Control Panel is functioning and show him or her the process of how to program it with the design.
- After he or she programs the design, make sure the superior or machine operator checks to make sure that it is correct. This must be done several times before the new helper is left on their own to program the machine without any supervision.

There is one main thing that they must learn and remember. The machines do exactly what they are told to do. If they are programmed wrong in any way, it is going to result in having a mistake. Having their work checked is very important for the first few weeks to make sure that they are in fact programming it correctly.

It is important to teach them to not get your hands or fingers in the way of the needles when they start the machine. Make sure that everyone around them is aware that the machine is starting so they do not get their hands or fingers in the way. One time very late at night, I got the index finger on my right hand caught under the needle. I was on a 12 head machine and was working on 12 white satin jackets. Not a good scene! Just to let you know, if you are not careful, you can get hurt. I only did it once!! Not a fun time!!

## **Keeping Track of Production Runs**

Each time the machine goes through a run, whether it is a single head machine or a multi-head machine, it is important to keep track of the run and how many completed pieces were sewn during that run.

This can be done very simply. Keep a tablet or note sheet sitting on the machine or the machine table beside the machine. Each time a run is completed, just make a hash mark on your paper plus the number of good pieces that were completed in that run.

This makes it very easy to check to see how many pieces are being completed against the number that you have on the Work Order. They should be the same, Make sure to add the finished number onto the Work Order when the job is completed. This is a very simple but necessary process. Attach the paper to the work order with the signature of the operator. This will help the operator and also the person that is doing the Finishing process.

## **Step 5 – Gaining Confidence**

Learning to become an Embroidery Machine Operator takes time and patience. It is not one skill that is learned overnight. There are many skills wrapped up in that one job of becoming a confident Embroidery Machine Operator. It takes approximately 3 months or 90 days to become a fully trained Embroidery Machine Operator that can be left on the machine alone without any supervision.

This is a process that is learned one step at a time so that they can gain the confidence that you need to run the machine alone. They must learn to pay attention to every detail along the way. One thing that I have not mentioned at all is the process of Hooping the Garments. That is a subject for another whole book. This is a process that in many factories, the operator has to do all of their hooping as the machine is running. This means that many times, the machine is sitting there silent while the operator is finishing up hooping

the amount of garments they need for the next run. The machine is only making money as it is running, not sitting there silent.

In other factories, there is an entire hooping department where all of the garments are hooped and carried to the machine by a helper to be loaded onto the machine. This is a more efficient way of running the production department and results in a higher number of items being completed by the end of the shift or at days end.

If you are in a situation where the embroidery machine operator hoops all of his or her own garments, then you must teach the new embroidery machine helper that skill also before he or she will be able to run the machine alone.

There are many different types of garments, and they get different types of backings or stabilizers depending on what the material or design is and that, like I said is another whole subject.

In order to be completely efficient in learning how to hoop all types of garments and different placement situations, the helper must also learn all about the different types of backings or stabilizers that are used for the different types of applications. This takes time and can add another month to the training cycle.

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The longer that you run with the operator as a helper, the sooner you will gain the confidence to be able to go on your own. You must be totally comfortable with the entire process and be ready to go it alone!

**If I can do it, You can do it!**

Joyce Jagger

The Embroidery Coach