

Big Frog Franchise Owner Finds DTG Perfect For Her Retail Location

BROTHER DTG TESTIMONIAL

Artist Grows DTG Business

Direct-to-Garment (DTG) Printing has long been recognized as the ideal decorating method for small quantities; detailed, sophisticated artwork with multiple colors; and photos. By capitalizing on DTG's strengths, Debbie Galvez, owner, Big Frog Custom T-Shirts & More of Selden in N.Y., has built a successful business catering to walk-ins as well as local schools and businesses since 2016.

BIG FROG FOCUSES ON DIGITAL DIRECT-TO-GARMENT PRINTING

Launched in 2008, Big Frog Custom T-Shirts & More® is a franchise concept specializing in custom-decorated apparel with over 80 retail locations in the United States and Canada. Big Frog focuses on digital direct-to-garment printing, but also offers heat transfers, vinyl, screen printing and embroidery.

Since Galvez cures all of her digital prints with a heat press, offering heat transfers and vinyl is a no-brainer. She contracts out her screen printing and embroidery work to local shops.

Thanks to her Brother GTXpro digital printer, which is designed for small to medium shops doing under 1,500 prints a month, she turns most orders in 24 hours, no matter how many colors in the design or whether it's on a light or a dark shirt.

With no minimums, Galvez charges \$19.99 per piece for light-colored garments and \$27.99 for darks and has found no price resistance. "People are willing to pay because they are getting one shirt with a photo on it, and where else can you get that?" she says.

Free artwork is another perk that attracts customers to Big Frog. The shop has two graphic designers on staff who work directly



with customers to create the final graphic. So whether clients bring in their own artwork or need help building a design from scratch, artwork time is built into the final price, reducing what can be a major objection for buyers, especially newcomers.

“When you walk in, we have two stations where the designer works with the customer,” she explains. “The artist has two screens so the client can see while the design is being created. We also have samples of all the shirts we offer, and we have garments showing the different printing methods so people can compare DTG to screen printing and heat transfers.”

Galvez estimates about half of her clients bring in artwork vs. starting from scratch. “Typically, a small business or a school already has a logo or a mascot, and they want to add only wording.” For individuals who come in with no idea, clip art

often is a great solution that doesn’t take up a lot of artist time.

The ability to reproduce photos is another major draw, according to Galvez. “We do a lot of memorial shirts,” she explains. “The customer puts a photo of a loved one on a shirt with a special saying and that becomes a memorable keepsake for the family.”

In addition to traditional apparel, puzzles have also been a popular product for use with photos. “We do puzzles all the time,” notes Galvez. “People love to do them for holidays and gift-giving.” Other promotional product items Galvez prints with her digital printer include golf towels, tote bags, beach towels and mouse pads.

Using Photoshop, in-house artists also will edit customer-supplied photos.



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— DEBBIE GALVEZ

“Sometimes, people will bring in a photo and ask if a person in the background can be taken out,” she says. Little extras like this build customer loyalty and increase repeat orders for the shop. It’s also a service that isn’t offered when using an online designer, giving Big Frog an edge over its many website-only competitors.

Another hot niche that Galvez has found to be a perfect fit for her DTG machine is t-shirt fundraising. These have been especially popular, because she sets them up as an online store.

“These have been great because clients don’t have to worry about collecting money. Supporters who want a shirt simply go to the site and pay when they order,” the owner explains. “We add on whatever amount they want on top of what we have to charge, and we cut them a check at the end of the sale.”

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“Fundraisers have definitely increased, especially since COVID. We also do shipping, so we’ll send it directly to the person’s home, making it totally touch-free. This makes it easy for PTAs and other groups to raise funds.”

The average digitally printed order ranges from 10 to 20 pieces. Depending on the number of colors and artwork, jobs of 50-100 pieces or more are typically sent out to be screen printed. Galvez estimates between 60% and 70% of all orders are printed with DTG.

Big Frog markets year-round by sending out direct mailers and eblasts for seasonal events such as back-to-school and the holidays. Social media is also a big part of the mix, and



the owner notes that she gets a lot of her on-site orders this way. The franchise is a big help in this area, sending marketing ideas, templates and other support on a monthly basis.

Galvez started out her business with the GT-3 machine, and she could not be happier with its performance. "It's our workhorse," she says. "It's a great printer. We've had it for five years, and there have been no problems with it."

In July, in order to have the ability to also print on dark shirts, Galvez added the GTXpro. "It's very easy to use. The Brother technician came and installed it and trained us on it. He stayed several days to make sure we understood how to use it.

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is a little bit sharper. Maintenance time has also improved. At the end of the day, when we do the daily upkeep, it takes us five minutes," says the owner. "Nothing with this new printer has been annoying or taken us a lot of time to do."

The entrepreneur feels there is still room for growth in this first store, and for the present will be focusing on increasing sales to the point of adding a third GTX machine. After that, who knows, a second Big Frog location may be in the cards.

Advice she would offer to newcomers is to consider purchasing a franchise. "Starting a business is difficult," she notes. "Big Frog made this really easy. You avoid mistakes made by newcomers, and they keep you on the right path."



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