



Need add-on sales?

Direct to garment is really hitting its stride.

Direct To Garment (DTG) has been one of the fastest growing decorated apparel technologies for the past several years, and for good reason. DTG has unlocked the potential for incredibly detailed printing on hoodies, shirts and hats. More than just unrivalled print quality, businesses that offer screen printing are appreciating DTG being significantly cleaner and less labor-intensive. With the market in disruption and every sale counting, incorporating DTG into your business may be just what you need to create add-on sales and provide customers with a more comprehensive or even one-stop printing solution. Curious about the kit required, floorspace and cost to get in? The 5-minute read below covers off the FAQs.

What should I look for in a DTG printer?

Not all DTG printers are created equal. It's worth comparing print speed, print size, maintenance and the capacity to print on other items. When weighing the options, look for a printer that not only handles your current needs but can support your growth in the future. Training is also key. This is your most expensive piece of kit, knowing how to use it and maintain it properly is key – ask your dealer what training they include with the purchase. Most new users will be printing shirts the first few days they have the DTG printer. Like any new decorating process, questions and challenges will come up. Make sure either the dealer or manufacturer of the equipment you purchase has documentation and resources to help you find the solutions. Beyond the printer itself, you will also need a method of pretreating (preferably a pretreat machine) and a heat press or a conveyer dryer to cure the pretreat and ink. More on that below.

Why a pre-treat machine is worth the investment

When it comes to pretreating your garment, consistency and repeatability are vital. A pretreat machine is a must-have for most companies. Spraying by hand is simply too inefficient and unreliable – especially if you are going to have other employees do this process. There are a variety of options, from small, single-sprayer units to big industrial machines with conveyer belts. The Cube is a bit of an industry favourite, and ensures garments are pre-treated consistently and accurately. Mastering the pretreat process will be a crucial element to making great garments. Make sure that the dealer you purchase from will train your team thoroughly on the proper pretreatment method for all colours of garments.

Wouldn't a conveyer be better for drying?

A conveyer dryer is effective for larger shops, but for just getting started, a heat press is smaller, uses less electricity and is more affordable. You'll need a heat press to cure both the pretreat and the ink. Make sure you understand what the recommended process is (time, temperature and pressure) for curing both the pretreat and ink. It may require you to have a press that can adjust the pressure quickly from light to heavy pressure or have the ability to hover over the garment without touching it.

What about graphics?

You'll need a computer with graphic design software. The type of graphic software program depends on the type of designs your customers will provide and the type of artwork you want to produce. Some DTG printers come with printing software that allows you to import in artwork for printing. Brother Graphics Lab software is simple enough for anyone with basic computer skills to use. Ask your dealer to show you the features in your chosen printing software so you understand its capabilities and limitations. If you don't have experience working with graphics files, factor in time to learn some software or get someone on your team to do this for you.

What else do I need?

DTG printers require controlled environmental conditions, specifically temperature and humidity, to run at their best. A simple hygrometer and humidifier can help monitor and maintain the DTG printer in the recommended ranges. Some additional things that come in handy include parchment paper for pressing, and spare parts for your machines such as nozzles for your pretreater. To print on more than just t-shirts, you'll need additional platens designed for printing on hats, shoes and sleeves. Check the manufacturer of your DTG printer provides instructions on how to print these items to ensure no damage will come to the equipment.

How much floor space will it take?

You don't need a lot of room but your printer prefers a specific humidity range, so it's best to have a shop space that is climate-controllable.

For efficiency, consider storage space for blank shirts, samples and supplies and ensure there's room for your team to move about. And - as always - keep growth in mind. If your business takes off and you decide to add more or larger equipment to your shop, you want to make sure you're not limited in growth potential just because of space.

What will I need to get in the game?

DTG Printers Range from \$25,000 up, plan on another \$5,000 for a suitable pre-treatment machine and a Heat press and you are properly equipped. The good news is, most dealers have financing programs available to help ease you in. When shopping around, don't underestimate the after-sales service, you'll want a dealer that will provide thorough training on the entire process - from start to finish.

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