



BACKGROUND ON BUSINESS

Uniforms Are Key To Today's Business Image

(NAPS)—Companies, large and small, are placing increased emphasis on the image they project—to their employees, to their stakeholders and to their customers. When it comes to a positive corporate identity, employees in distinctive uniforms can be a surprisingly effective tool.

Firms throughout North America have been discovering the strategic value of uniforms. It's now estimated that more than 45 million people in the U.S. are wearing specified work apparel to their jobs. Nearly six million of them participate in uniform rental programs that will amount to estimated industry-wide revenues of \$700 million in 2001.

Uniforms create a competitive advantage on three fronts: the end consumer, the company itself and the employee. As services tend to be labor-intensive, consumer image of a service business often depends on the actual person delivering the service. Public perception of employees is vital to creating and maintaining customer trust. In many ways, the uniform performs the same functions as other kinds of "packaging."

For example, distinct colors, emblems and company logos permit the service provider to be easily identified and to stand out from the competition. Like branded products, a familiar "service package" increases credibility and assures consumers that a reliable company stands behind their product.

For the company itself, image is crucial to a competitive advantage. It is estimated that corporate spending on image advertising alone amounts to more than \$1 billion annually. An organization's positive corporate identity can inspire loyalty, shape decision making, aid recognition and attract customers. This all directly relates to profitability.

Uniforms also have the ability to influence employee job performance. While most people acknowledge that a person's appearance affects the judgments of others, not as many realize that it also influ-



Uniforms help inspire confidence in customers and loyalty in employees.

ences how people feel about themselves. It has been reported that apparel has the ability to boost self-esteem, positively affect behavior on the job and build departmental teamwork—all translating to increased productivity.

According to Robert Isaacson of UniFirst Corporation, a leading supplier of work uniforms and career apparel to businesses throughout the United States and Canada, "Uniforms give people a sense of pride and a feeling of being a part of a team. For companies utilizing work wear programs, the benefits often show up in their bottom lines. In fact, a recent study sponsored by the Uniform and Textile Service Association and conducted by J.D. Power and Associates conclusively showed that both consumers and business-to-business people prefer to see uniformed employees at the companies they deal with."

To compete in today's crowded service economy, the successful company finds ways to stand out from the others and the uniform concept has been shown to be an efficient and highly visible way to accomplish this.

For information and/or a free catalog showing the wide range of uniform and work wear options available, contact UniFirst at (800) 225-3364 or visit their Web sites at www.unifirst.com and www.shopunifirst.com.