

# Business PROFILE

In just over five short years, Raised Edge – the Aurora, Ontario-based specialty decorator – has built quite a reputation among the industry's notable promotional houses and retail manufacturers for delivering on what others promise: service.

The company was founded in 2008 by Thomas Milne who, prior to buying out the company of former NHLer and three-time Stanley Cup champion Jeff Beukeboom, was decorating official game worn jerseys at the Air Canada Centre for the Toronto Maple Leafs.

"At that time, I wanted to venture out on my own and Jeff owned a debossing company but was looking to get back into coaching hockey, so I purchased the equipment as a bulk asset sale, Jeff trained me on all the equipment and I started Raised Edge," recalls Milne.

While Beukeboom remained a minority partner, Marc Di Schiavi, who cut his teeth in the decorating industry at Stahl's Canada, joined on as principle partner in 2011 bringing with him the latest in heat transfer knowledge and experience. "We are now seen as a industry specialist on the heat transfer side of the decorating business," says Di Schiavi.

Only five plus years into the business, Raised Edge has grown exponentially year over year and its client list is as diverse as it is impressive, reading like a who's who of industry players.

In addition to operating as Trimark Sportswear's third-party decorator from 2008 through to 2012 for all heat transfers, embossing, debossing, laser etching and tackle twill decoration projects, the company recently entered into a vendor's agreement with Stormtech Performance Apparel in which they will handle all of the brand's embossing, debossing, laser, heat printing and other decorations.

The company also decorates for NIKE GOLF, handling all of the merchandise for the brand's Club Link Green Grass Program as well as some of the apparel for the Canadian Open Golf Championships.

"On behalf of Nike, we also decorate for Hockey Canada, the World Juniors, and right now we are working with Nike

for some of the Sochi Olympic products," says Di Schiavi.

In addition to direct manufacturers, Raised Edge does the majority of its work as a third-party decorator for large promotional distributors in our industry. "We do not work with any end-users, and our customers respect that," explains Di Schiavi. "We are here to partner with them and assist them, not to bite the hand that feeds."

Raised Edge also handles all of the on-ice cresting for the Toronto Marlies and the Hamilton Bulldogs, in addition to the on-field cresting for the Toronto Rock and – up until last year – for the Toronto FC as well.

"We have a mobile cresting trailer which was used at every home game," says Milne. Fans would buy TFC team apparel and Raised Edge would decorate

it on-site at BMO Field.

In addition to partnering with numerous professional sports teams, Raised Edge also works with a large number of minor hockey associations, mainly due to its specialization in tackle twill – one of their many strengths that sets them apart from their competition.

"When you work with pro teams, you are basically on call 24 hours a day," explains Milne, stressing that they have never missed a deadline. "We take on as much work as we can,

and our work ends up being quality over quantity."

Quality and service are the top priorities at Raised Edge,



**Raised Edge Partners:**  
Marc Di Schiavi (left) and Thomas Milne (right)



**A look inside Raised Edge's production facility located in Aurora, Ontario**

and they are very particular regarding what work comes in and what leaves the facility. This attention to detail is reflected in its client base and in the company's position in the ever price-competitive decorating marketplace.

"We are not the cheapest out there, (nor do we want to be)," notes Di Schiavi. "You basically get what you pay for, and if you are paying \$100 for a jacket, there is no sense in nickel and diming the decoration."

As specialists in embossing, debossing, laser, and heat transfers, Raised Edge are experts in uniquely decorating the more complex fabrics which are currently available. Another area of specialization for the company is laser etching,

which is a decorating method that has recently caught on in terms of popularity in the corporate market. Having been one of the first to offer this technique upon its release several years ago, Raised Edge is well positioned to accommodate the increasing surge in demand for this process which they foresee in the coming years.

"As fabric technology changes, and company's logos continue to evolve and become more complex – with more colours and gradations – many of the new

decorating technologies we specialize in allow us to achieve that complexity," notes Di Schiavi, who briefly hints at something his company is currently developing. "We are going to be releasing a new type of transfer that, once it is tested, will revolutionize the industry."

Constantly evolving and improving one's craft comes with its own inherent challenges. For Raised Edge, refining its services to the point of specialization as a third party decorator has become ever more complex as the company strives to always stay ahead of the curve when it comes to handling new fabric compositions which are utilized in the manufacturing process.

To achieve this competitive advantage, the company undergoes extensive R&D, comprised of elaborate and rigorous testing – something Di Schiavi refers to as "our fun weekends and late nights."

This unyielding dedication to service and specialization is a critical factor for the success Raised Edge has enjoyed over such a relatively short time frame. As decorating technology continues to evolve and fabrics become ever more complex, Raised Edge has already positioned itself ahead of the next curve for years to come.



**Among the numerous decorating methods that Raised Edge specializes in, include:**  
Tackle Twill (top), Debossing (above left) and Laser Embellishment (above right)

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**The company's innovative mobile decorating trailer which is used on-site at events**