

# Ashfield – Where bigger IS better

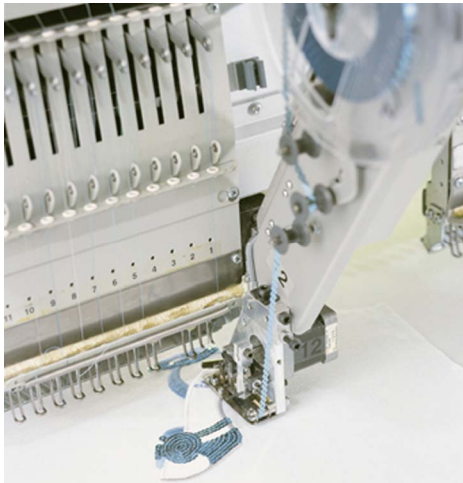


ashfield®

**There's cause for celebration at ashfield in Leicester. After 25 years Ayub Mahomed, Ashfield's Managing Director, is happy to report that the Midlands based garment decoration business is still going strong.**

From humble beginnings as a family concern back in 1982, what was then Animm Textiles, has not so much grown, but rather evolved to become Europe's largest decoration facility. And Ayub, or Ash as he's known to friends and customers alike, attributes this longevity to its dedicated staff, business focus and a loyal customer base.

In 1987, when he first entered the business, his gut feeling was to move it away from its traditional manufacturing roots and to position Animm as a service provider to the trade. Now in its third decade, with a name change and re-brand under its belt, that decision seems to have paid off. Ashfield has weathered the offshore production storms that have impacted so heavily on many of its competitors.



Whilst many were pulling in their horns, Ashfield remained convinced that the market still existed for a quality UK based supplier and continued to invest heavily in equipment, systems and people. Now, one of only a handful of those within the industry accredited to the Investors in People standard and with production operating to ISO, Ash feels he's reaping the rewards of this outlay.

*"We've never been shy of acquiring new plant or machinery, as long as we could build a good business case for it. But anyone with money can buy equipment. Only the organisation with the*

*human resources, skills and systems to manage it effectively can deliver the benefits."*

These skills and systems he speaks so highly of include full time in-house digitisers, a creative design department, and a focused customer service team with sourcing and effective project management skills, which all go to ensure the customer sleeps easily at night.



Sam Bhula, Production Manager, has been with Ashfield for the entire 25 years and mirrors his M.D.'s confidence in what they have to offer:

*"Customers know that if we commit to a delivery deadline, we'll meet it. End of! All elements of the process are undertaken here, on the premises. So there are no links in a chain that might let us down."*

And Sam's well aware of just what can go wrong. When one of the UK's major brands suffered some major offshore quality issues the agency approached Ashfield for its help.

Although the garments themselves were manufactured to specification and arrived on time, a combination of colour inconsistency and image distortion within the embroidery meant that the

entire batch of 30,000 units was rejected. And, for a promotion with an immovable deadline this could have been catastrophic. Sam wryly notes:

*"We don't see ourselves as troubleshooters, as such. Our own processes have been developed to ensure 'problem avoidance', and that's always the case when we get to work with the customer from the outset. However, we have been known to step in to the breach to pick up the pieces!"*

Ashfield offers a raft of services, over and above those of its closest rivals. These include a secure warehousing facility for holding customers' stock; allowing them to call off garments as required, flexibility to cater for small production runs and fast turnaround. With services like these which set them apart, Ash is open minded about adding other complementary services to the portfolio where necessary. He's pragmatic about the future and, as a recently appointed director of EMTEX\*, passionate about his business and the environment in which it operates:

*"If there's one thing that the last quarter of a century has taught me, in this industry you can't stand still. Being competitively priced is a given, it's only the extra value that you can add that will keep customers coming back for more."*

\* EMTEX is an industry trade association which assists East Midlands clothing and textiles businesses to face the challenges of the industry, providing business support, advice and guidance.



## Ashfield's vital statistics

