

# By Design

Design Resources Inc. is a world-class resource for apparel marketers and is headquartered right in our backyard.

words MAGGIE VANBUSKIRK

After 14 years of juggling multiple enterprises, Dave Reid, president of Design Resources Inc. (DRI), replies to the question, "Is keeping track of five different businesses very difficult?" with a smile and simple answer:

"It's not for me."

Reid started DRI, a multifaceted company specializing in the design, sourcing and importing of apparel in 1995 after breaking away from Kansas City-based corporate merchandise manufacturer Swingster, which is now Staples Promotional Products. Seven years later, he expanded the enterprise to create Caps Direct followed by DRI DUCK Traders, Creative Resources, INK and, most recently, a partnership with Nike (a signed deal as of January 2009) and a new marketing platform with

the Kansas City Royals, which puts the DRI DUCK brand front row for every left field fly ball.

Once a three-man-show, DRI now operates four sister companies with more than 60 employees sharing the top floor of its Overland Park headquarters. It also has a Lenexa distribution and warehouse facility and wholly owns and operates overseas offices in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore. In addition, it maintains exclusive office affiliates in South Korea, Taiwan and India.

Caps Direct was created in 2002 as an operating division of DRI with a specific focus on headwear. It primarily serves the corporate identity market, working through promotional products distributors and producing a million caps a month.

Caps Direct custom designs each cap, researching market trends (flat-billed hats are back in style says Vice President Jason Krakow) and working with customers and overseas operations.

Local marketing firms that have relationships with the Royals have approached Caps Direct to manufacture hats for game-day giveaways. This season, Caps Direct has been commissioned to produce seven ball caps. If you attended the Royals Ladies Night in May and collected a cap, then you already own an example of a Caps Direct-manufactured product. The next Caps Direct-made hat, the Royals 40th anniversary cap, will be given away at the Aug. 22 Royals versus Twins game. The design was chosen by fans as a part of the 40th anniversary celebration.





Krakov says Caps Direct works to make the personal connection with brands come alive in retail. He says people wear a lot of hats, and for someone to identify so much with a brand that they are willing to put it on their head is the end result for which his team strives.

“The typical industry approach is to put a logo on a cap,” he says. “We think of the logo as a cap.”

In 2003, DRI opened its second venture, DRI DUCK Traders, which began as apparel for the farm and fleet market —“the hardcore working guy”— and has evolved with the addition of more technical products to include the outdoor sports market.

“What we’ve done is cross over from workwear into lifestyle outdoor products, and our products can live in either world,” says Reid. “It has a quality level of the outdoor-sports market, but it has the industrial strength of a workwear product. So, it’s a garment you can wear to work or play.”

As part of the Royals \$250 million stadium renovations, DRI DUCK lends its name as the title sponsor of the new general admission fountain seats located in

The K’s left field. Every game throughout the season, the first 100 fans to purchase tickets for DRI DUCK Fountain Seats receive a complimentary collectable cap. DRI DUCK is also outfitting the field crew and sponsoring interactive games such as the Duck Shoot for fans to play on the Crown-Vision board to win gift certificates. In addition, throughout the season DRI DUCK

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will upgrade randomly selected fans’ seats to Diamond Club level and present them with DRI DUCK apparel.

“The tie-ins are very strong, and we’ve had a great response,” says Reid. “We were excited about the stadium remodel, the 40th anniversary, the prospects of continuing improvement of the team and the



## ENTERPRISE

Royals marketing department was very helpful in developing plans that would align our interests with the Royals fans.”

In 2006, DRI's third endeavor, Creative Resources, INK (CRI), was formed as a full-service design and brand-development company. Creative Director Chad Kaberlein says CRI tries to offer clients everything they could need to help their marketing efforts, including brand development, Web site development, packaging and print material.

Most recently, DRI added Branded Custom Sportswear (BCS) to its list of sister companies. BCS is a licensee of Nike and will help extend the “signature swoosh” into more college bookstores and the military.

“People recognize the Nike brand,” says Reid. “It’s the No. 1 recognized sports brand in the world in terms of marketing college licensed products. Nike sells directly to the top 85 universities, but product is not available to the others, and we’re going to make it available to them.”

Reid says they will become licensed with schools such as Central Missouri State and Pittsburg State and work with them to offer their custom school logo and graphics on Nike products. There are an estimated 3,000 schools for BCS to tap into, and they plan to start shipping products this August. Reid says this is a significant growth opportunity for DRI as it puts the company in touch with different products and markets while adding to the visibility of the biggest sports brand in the world.

So, how is it that Reid finds juggling multiple enterprises such an easy task?

“I really have to credit the management staff of Design Resources for their professionalism and varied areas of expertise,” he says. “The infrastructure that we have built here combined with the staff’s flexibility has made it very easy for me to add to our portfolio and have the confidence that we will be successful.” ♦



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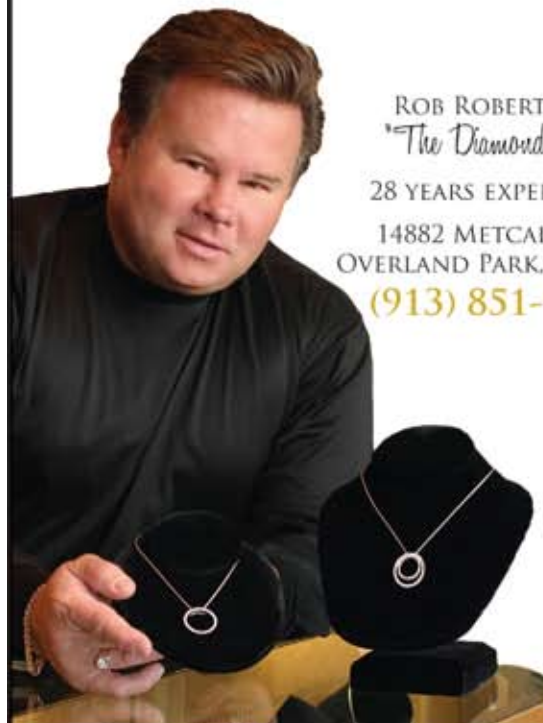
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