



# On Top of Their Industry Top Promotions

**Top Promotions Family, front row, from left to right: Tom Kilcoyne, Jenny Rhodes, Roger Kilcoyne, Whitney Reisdorf, Julie Reisdorf, Craig Reisdorf, Louan Reisdorf, Don Reisdorf, Tanya Reisdorf, Jacqui Reisdorf.**

By Angela Mihm Nigro

Look around. Branding on shirts, hats and promotional items galore. There's a chance Top Promotions of Middleton produced that piece you're looking at. For 25 years, the two-family, two-generation business has been growing, right to the top of their industry.

In 1984, when Don and Louan Reisdorf invested in Top Promotions, they intended it to be a part-time, screen-printing company with a couple of manual presses, Don recalls. Don and Louan became sole owners the same year.

In January 1985, Don's two best friends, who intended to work in sales for Top Promotions, died in a tragic plane crash. Don knew he would need help running Top Promotions, so he contacted his son Craig Reisdorf, who was working construction in California, to help run and grow the business. With a positive history of working together, the family was excited to reunite their efforts.

Two years after the initial investment, business continued to leap forward when Top Promotions bought an embroidery machine, becoming the area's first company to offer both screen-printing and embroidery for apparel decorating options.

While screen-printing streamed out of a 4,000-square-foot facility, embroidery hummed along in Don and Louan's home. By 1992, Top Promotions needed more room and all services relocated to a 13,000-square-foot

building in the Middleton Business Park.

In 1994, as the Wisconsin Badgers prepared for the Rose Bowl, the company prepared also, purchasing embroidery equipment to run Rose Bowl apparel in the garage of Craig and wife, Julie. Growth continued with the 1996 Green Bay Packers Super Bowl victory and two years later, everyone was at a crossroads.

While Craig and Julie opted for expansion in 1998, Don and Louan took a buy-out from a third-party investor, Jerry Kilcoyne. Jerry provided growth capital and his brother, Roger Kilcoyne, became CFO. After moving into a new, 27,000-square-foot facility, Top Promotions saw unprecedented growth to its present size.

Looking ahead, Top Promotions plans to diversify revenue streams, Roger explains, including a full-service, national fulfillment program, increased outside sales efforts, and continued "hot market" sporting events requiring last-minute results, like NCAA Tournament shirts.

Individual experts lead specific areas within Top Promotions while consulting one another on major business decisions. Craig focuses on sales and operations; Julie handles embroidery and post-production; Don assists with accounts payable; Roger manages the sales staff and looks at the overall financial picture. Several members from both families hold various roles within the company.

Nationally rated as a top 100 volume screen-printer, Top Promotions balances

growth and growing too fast.

"We're aware of our challenges, such as continued improvements in quality control, business processes and efficiencies, and make great effort to continue learning and becoming the best we can be," says Rodger. ■

## Top Promotions by the numbers

**Industry:** Largest regional screen-printing, embroidery and promotional product supplier

**Years in business:** 25

**Sales:** Over \$10 million

**Employees:** 45; two shifts, four automatic presses and 66 embroidery heads

**Locations:** 47,000 square feet over three locations

**On success:** "We wouldn't be where we are without the constant support of many family and friends. My father always said, 'Work hard and good things will happen.' I live by that."

—Craig Reisdorf, owner, second generation

**On family:** "We're proud to call Top Promotions a family business. We're all family here and that's what counts."

—Roger Kilcoyne, owner