



DIRECT CAPS:

How Visibility Helped Turn a Great Product Into a Growing Business

FROM HEADWEAR MANUFACTURER TO PROMO SUPPLIER

For more than two decades, **Direct Caps** (asi/48015) has built its business around one simple idea: **deliver quality products, stand behind your customers and keep evolving**. What began as a headwear manufacturer has grown into a nationwide supplier with its own overseas manufacturing site, multiple U.S. distribution locations and a continually expanding footprint, including a new Georgia facility to better serve customers across the East Coast.

Direct Caps has built a reputation for dependable service, quality craftsmanship and a willingness to adapt to whatever the market demands.



Michael Steed
Business Director, Direct Caps

According to Direct Caps Business Director Micahel Steed, visibility and trust are what turn a strong product line into a growing business. When Direct Caps first entered the promotional products industry in 2009, growth wasn't guaranteed. Like many suppliers entering a competitive market, the company had manufacturing expertise and the product line, but not the industry recognition – enter ASI®.

BUILDING MORE THAN VISIBILITY

Through **ESP+**, **ASI Shows®**, **advertising opportunities** like ESP+ Sponsored Content and distributor-focused marketing, the company built visibility across the promotional products buying journey. Michael shared that creating multiple touchpoints helped distributors discover, remember and ultimately choose Direct Caps.

"The ability to connect with distributors in different ways has been one of the biggest advantages."

Rather than relying on a single marketing channel, Direct Caps invested in a long-term visibility strategy. From Pay-for-Placement to homepage advertising, the company continued expanding its presence across ASI's platform resulting in higher customer acquisition and larger orders.

When asked whether those additional investments paid off, Steed made it clear that every investment had been worth it saying, "ASI has definitely paid off."



TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES

One of Direct Caps' biggest growth moments came during one of the industry's most challenging periods. When the pandemic disrupted businesses in 2020, Direct Caps quickly leveraged its manufacturing capabilities to produce PPE, including face masks and other protective products. The pivot allowed the company to support customers during critical times while introducing entirely new buyers to its brand. This worked to their advantage as they started to phase out PPE products and phase back into headwear.

As the market continued to evolve, an ASI account executive worked alongside the Direct Caps team, helping identify opportunities, evaluate performance and maximize product visibility. That partnership became especially valuable post-COVID when supply chain shortages left distributors scrambling for trucker caps. While many suppliers were out of stock, Direct Caps had inventory, and they took advantage of that leverage.



STRATEGIC PROMOTION

With strategic promotion through ASI and strong distributor visibility, the company was able to capitalize on demand and win significant new business.



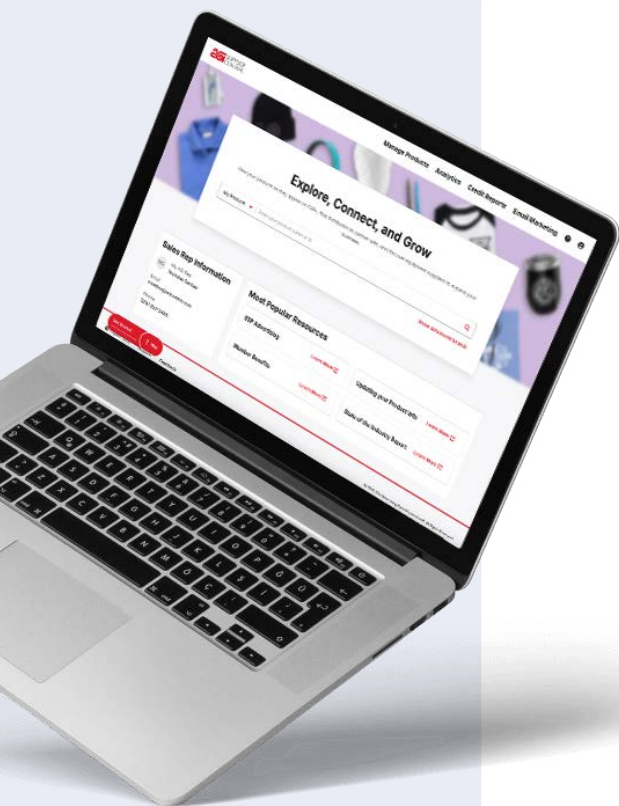
WHY THEY CAME BACK

Perhaps the strongest endorsement of ASI isn't why Direct Caps joined, but why they returned. After leaving ASI years earlier, the company kept hearing the same message from distributors.

"You're not on ESP+."

Distributors expected suppliers to be where they already searched for products. Without that visibility, Direct Caps was missing opportunities before conversations even started. That feedback ultimately led the company back to ASI in 2019. This time around, they really took advantage of all the ASI supplier opportunities and saw that effort rewarded with **bigger orders**.

Since rejoining, Direct Caps has expanded its operations and strengthened distributor relationships in the promotional products channel. Michael also pointed to ESP+'s ease of use, noting that managing products and keeping listings current is significantly more intuitive than alternative platforms.





GROWTH HAPPENS WHEN BUYERS CAN FIND YOU

Looking back, **Direct Caps** doesn't point to one advertisement, one trade show or one marketing campaign as the reason for its success. It points to the **continuous momentum** they keep up through **product visibility** and **meaningful distributor relationships**.

ASI helped Direct Caps stay in front of distributors, identify new opportunities and adapt to changing market conditions. Today, the company continues expanding into new markets while proving an important lesson for every supplier entering, or growing within, the promotional products industry:

Growth happens with patience
and being where the right
buyers can find you.

Nearly

50%

of Direct Caps' sales come
from promo.



Explore an ASI membership and see how it can help
the right buyers find your products.

