



6 APPAREL'S TOP INNOVATORS

Apparel Magazine salutes many of the key visionary firms shaping the industry in its 2nd annual special issue. Profiles of each of our 40 winners highlight their creativity, determination and strategies for moving successfully forward even amidst a stagnating economy.

REPORTING BY MICHAEL D. COLE, STACEY KUSTERBECK AND JORDAN K. SPEER.

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As its recent caps and apparel confirm, New Era Cap is transitioning to a fashion-conscious, trendy and stylish mainstream brand.

Apparel's 2009 **TOP** **INNOVATORS**

What makes an apparel company truly an innovator?

Many of the answers lie in the pages that follow, which honor our **Apparel** Innovators.

While the strategies of our recipients are diverse, the vision, the determination and the leadership each demonstrates are not.

To all of our honorees, **Apparel** Magazine tips its hat to you for your resourcefulness, your creativity and most importantly, your innovation.

Priscilla of Boston

HEADQUARTERS: Boston, MA | www.priscillaofboston.com

NOMINATED BY: CGS/BlueCherry | www.cgsinc.com



The Priscilla of Boston legacy began in 1945 when fashion designer Priscilla Kidder opened the Bride's Shop on Newbury Street in Boston, MA. Kidder became known for her unique, handmade wedding gowns, and gained national recognition when she designed gowns for the daughters of President Johnson and President Nixon. She also garnered international distinction when she designed exquisite bridesmaid gowns for Grace Kelly's nuptials to Prince Rainier of Monaco in 1956.

Since then, the company has continued its tradition of unique and handcrafted designs and the popularity of Kidder's dresses has allowed the company to grow to 15 signature salons and select specialty boutiques nationwide. The Priscilla of Boston (POB) group has expanded to include a collection of top designer brands including Melissa Sweet, Vineyard, Platinum, Reverie and its newest brand, Jewel, introduced last month.

As the company worked to keep pace with its explosive growth, POB found that it needed: a faster way to communicate between offices and teams; a better way to organize and share information among designers and other teams; and a more efficient way of working with its business partners.

More specifically, without a single repository for design data, the frequent design changes made by the team resulted in a lack of visibility among team members. Various versions of designs existed in "silos" of disparate data, including spreadsheets and e-mails that were owned by individuals.

This lack of visibility into revisions and processes often resulted in errors and missed deadlines, and made it very difficult to track milestones of the design and development processes.

The search for a solution to put an end to this lack of transparency ended with the implementation of CGS's BlueCherry product lifecycle management (PLM) application, which has greatly enhanced

communication between the design, merchandising and production teams. This in turn has sped the design and development processes and made them much more efficient and error free.

Cycle-time compression has been driven by having the right information, at the right time and available to the right people, all centrally organized in the PLM system. For example, the system has allowed the product coordinator to issue completed tech packs for 15 styles in four days instead of seven days — a time savings of 43 percent. Furthermore, the system's unlimited image and text storage has provided the designers with added freedom of creativity.

Additionally, the system has become an intelligence tool for the company: designers now have access to styles, cost sheets and bills of materials which they can use to proactively manage costs at an early stage in the process. ◀

See CGS's ad on inside front cover.

American Apparel

HEADQUARTERS: Los Angeles, CA | www.americanapparel.net

NOMINATED BY: Motorola | www.motorola.com/rfid



Blazing a bold trail defines American Apparel, now the largest clothing manufacturer in the United States.

In the 12 years since American Apparel's dynamic founder and CEO Dov Charney first sub-contracted sewing in a humble facility beneath a rumbling Interstate 10 freeway underpass in Los Angeles, the vertically integrated clothing manufacturer known mainly for its trendy cotton knitwear has been uncompromising in its marketing, social stances and business strategies.

In its rapid ascension as one of the fastest growing retail chains ever, the Made-in-the-USA company has been lauded (and often envied) for its progressive policies, including its bucking the offshore trend, its green commitment (in March, American Apparel was named an *Apparel sus-*



An RFID item-level pilot program by American Apparel implemented at New York stores, including these Soho and Harlem locations, was deemed so successful that the retailer plans to roll out the project across all 250 of its stores.

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tainability All-Star), and its heralded “sweatshop-free” labor practices and generosity to its employees (a recently opened onsite medical clinic at its current L.A. factory is just one of several renowned benefits offered by the company).

A recent initiative by American Apparel is further testimony of its “out-in-front” ingenuity: while the apparel industry in general has been considered a notorious laggard in accepting RFID’s potential, American Apparel has embraced, implemented — and by all accounts thrived from the technology.

Starting with American Apparel’s 18 locations in the New York area, the retailer last year deployed one of the industry’s first RFID-based item-level tracking systems. It offers sales staff and store managers a real-time view of store and distribution center inventory.

An ROI success, plans are to expand the system to provide visibility across American Apparel’s entire supply chain, including at all of its 250 stores.

The retailer currently reports 99 percent inventory count accuracy with the RFID

solution, dramatically improving on-floor availability.

The program commenced in March 2008 with a pilot at American Apparel’s Columbia University store in New York City, where some 40,000 items were initially tagged. Motorola was chosen as the strategic hardware partner, working with American Apparel and a team of tag and software providers to create the solution that improved visibility of merchandise stocked on the store floor and stock room, thus allowing staff to count and replenish inventory on a consistent basis while reducing labor needed for the process.

These days with the RFID solution, weekly inventory counts can be accomplished with just two people in two hours, vs. four people for eight hours as previously required.

“During these challenging economic times, every sale counts,” explains Zander Hollander, American Apparel’s RFID technology director. “Prior to rolling out the item-level inventory system, sales were lost due to the fact that items could be in the store, but missing from store shelves;

RFID has allowed us to gain greater visibility while creating a more intuitive easy-to-use tracking system for our employees. The system improves our employees’ efficiency, allowing them to spend less time on inventory management — and more time helping customers ring valuable sales.”

Another intrinsic benefit: as it continues serving a youth-driven marketplace, the project only promotes American Apparel’s standing as a hip and technologically innovative retailer and employer.

“We’ve always been admired for being savvy,” Hollander says. “This project extends that reputation.” ◀

See Motorola’s ad on back cover.

Editor’s note: Learn more about American Apparel’s breakthrough RFID implementation in an upcoming white paper available at apparelmag.com this month and in the July issue of *Apparel*.

Spyder

HEADQUARTERS: Boulder, CO | www.spyder.com

NOMINATED BY: Epicor | www.epicor.com

Spyder has expanded its web — for more than 30 years it focused strictly on engineering its premium skiwear that integrates high-tech fabrics, fashion and functionality, but a few years ago, it made the move from wholesale to direct sales when it launched its first retail stores.

To support the move, the company sought a robust solution to support point-of-sale and back office operations. The company acknowledged that its previous IT system was small and would not be scalable beyond a few stores; additionally the old system did not have a customer relationship management (CRM) component. Still, the specialty ski company found itself between a proverbial bunny trail and a black diamond ski slope (somewhere in middle ground that is), as it was seeking to avoid far-reaching capital investments and an all-encompassing implementation.

In search of a system that met its CRM and growth requirements, yet didn't require such massive IT infrastructure, expenditures and support, Spyder turned to a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) retail technology offering from Epicor.

The Epicor solution, according to Spyder, enables the company to cost effectively leverage the needed retail technology that in the past was only available to the largest retail enterprises. Epicor's integrated retail SaaS solution is a pay-as-you-go offering, consisting of merchandising, allocation, replenishment, business intelligence, POS, sales audit and CRM. The solution involves a one-time start-up charge and a fixed fee, including implementation, integration, support and maintenance and ongoing updates and upgrades. In addition, Spyder is able to leverage Epicor support services, freeing itself to run its dynamically changing business. From project kickoff to go-live, Spyder and Epicor teams worked on an aggressive timeline to implement the turnkey solution within four months.



For more than 30 years Spyder focused on engineering its premium skiwear brand, but a few years ago, launched its first retail operations. It selected Epicor's SaaS solution to help it handle the transition — and enable it to seamlessly swoosh past any bumps along its trail.

Spyder outfits the U.S. and Canadian alpine ski teams and the company adds an average of 20,000 SKUs to its product lineup every year. It is using Epicor Retail to build up its customer database, collect more quality information about those customers, and improve customer engagement through email blasts and other communications.

Spyder opened its first retail store in Massachusetts in 2006 and since then has opened locations in places including New York, Pennsylvania and Illinois where the system is being used.

Beyond meeting its present needs, Spyder chose Epicor Retail with the future in mind as well. In 2008, the ski company acquired Cloudveil Mountain Works Inc., which produces outdoor, mountaineering and fly fishing apparel, and the company now has the capability of leveraging Cloudveil's e-commerce channel through the Epicor solution, should it decide to go in that direction.

With the right infrastructure now in place, this Spyder web now has the opportunity to grow. ◀



New Look implemented the Oracle SOA Suite to leverage existing and future IT investments and accelerate business performance by reengineering processes within its buying and merchandising function.

New Look

HEADQUARTERS: Weymouth Dorset, UK
www.newlook.co.uk

NOMINATED BY: Oracle | www.oracle.com

New Look, one of the UK's leading fashion retailers, has more than 600 stores across Europe and 15 franchise stores in the Middle East. The company recently opened an online channel, which quickly reached half a million visitors per week.

In order to increase operational flexibility and strengthen its foundation for future growth as it expands internationally, New Look implemented the Oracle SOA (Service Oriented Architecture) Suite. ▶

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As one of the first retailers globally to deploy SOA to achieve process excellence, New Look has championed a business-led approach, in contrast to companies that adopt a technology or integration approach.

By focusing on the business objectives, SOA quickly gained momentum across New Look's trading floor. SOA's visibility and control has improved the accuracy of 40 million SKU store records updated by the markdown application, and 3,000 purchase orders (POs) raised each week. This has eliminated costly errors, ensured markdown cost and expenses to margin are properly assigned and reduced lead time, with suppliers receiving orders up to a week earlier.

The markdown solution has enabled a common process to be adopted across the UK and international stores for the first time, enabling the total impact of markdown decisions to be measured.

The PO solution has allowed New Look to introduce franchise-specific POs, ensuring that the franchise channels have guaranteed stock. Now, with the introduction of upstream hubs, SOA

has enabled direct deliveries, bypassing the UK. This alone has helped reduce three weeks of lead time to franchise markets, with the associated handling and freight savings.

Oracle and Accenture, supported by group directors as business sponsors, helped ensure that New Look's project remained focused on the business.

To date, New Look has completed phase two of the four-phase SOA program, which began in June 2007. Both markdown and purchase order projects have delivered real-time savings, and considerable strategic benefits have been realized across the business from the integration and expansion of new channels and markets.

"Investing early in this emerging technology has created real value," says Carl McPhail, New Look's CEO. "Oracle SOA Suite has enabled us to focus on processes and the way we work, stripping significant non-value effort from the buying and merchandising teams, which in turn has enabled them to focus on growing the business. More importantly, SOA has helped us create a flexible platform supporting our strategic expansion." ◀

Restore Clothing

HEADQUARTERS: New York, NY | www.restoreclothing.com

NOMINATED BY: Unifi/Repreve | www.repreve.com

In only a year, fashion industry veterans Celeste and Anthony Lilore have seemingly met all their lofty aspirations with their development of the Restore Clothing line; an eco-friendly, socially responsible brand that was launched in May 2008.

The Restore acronym symbolizes the stringent standards that the Lilore husband-and-wife team adhere to; it stands for "Responsible, Earth Friendly, Sustainable, Technological, Organic, Recycled and Ergonomic."

Restore Clothing aims to bridge the gap between fashion, performance and environmental friendliness, as it produces transitional apparel designed for activities such as yoga and Pilates (versatile enough to go from "work out to out after work" the company proclaims.)

All those ambitions notwithstanding, the clothing created by the Lilores (Anthony previously worked in the design area for brands including Club Monaco and Perry Ellis) is manufactured exclusively in New York City — with the couple being just as adamant in their passion for saving Manhattan's garment district as they are about the environment. They assert that the elimination of excessive fuel by manufacturing so close to



Photo by Rebecca Zilenziger, www.rebeccaz.com.

In launching Restore Clothing, Anthony and Celeste Lilore (pictured above) have built a brand dually conscious about saving the environment and Manhattan's garment district.

home benefits the environment and local community.

As it built its brand, the Lilores' grandiose vision has become a "Unifi"d one.

Restore Clothing sought out Unifi, the prominent producer of multi-filament polyester and nylon textured yarns and related raw materials, as Celeste sought an eco-friendly replacement for fabrics containing polyester.

Restore Clothing began to use Unifi's Repreve environmentally friendly polyester yarns, made from 100 percent recycled materials. Thereafter, the Restore brand was instrumental in persuading Unifi and Repreve to take the Repreve line further and develop an unprecedented nylon 6, 6 yarn

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that is similarly made from 100 percent recycled materials. Restore Clothing was the first to adopt the Repreve nylon in a pilot program and the Repreve product is scheduled to be commercially launched this summer.

The Repreve yarns are used in several of Restore Clothing's styles including the crossover tank, crossover bra, drape front top, active short, active capri and active pant and hoodie. According to Unifi, the

production of Repreve offsets the need to produce virgin polyester and nylon, conserving petroleum-based resources. On average, current annual production of Repreve is estimated to conserve the equivalent of six million gallons of gasoline.

The distribution channel strategy by Restore Clothing is focused, with the line being offered at spas, specialty sports and fitness stores and facilities.

The Lillores describe their line as "slow fashion," characterizing it as timeless with "nothing in excess and everything in balance."

Through Restore Clothing, they are restoring faith that apparel can be functional, fashionable and also socially conscious — on many different levels. ◀

The Force

HEADQUARTERS: Nashville, TN | www.theforceonline.com

NOMINATED BY: PrimaLoft | www.primaloft.com

VF Corporation has put its full force behind The Force. VF, the \$7 billion publicly traded apparel company, with a sundry portfolio of world-famous brands (including Nautica, Wrangler Jeans and The North Face, among others), diversified further when, in 1999, VF Imagewear acquired Horace Small — a pioneering brand that in 1937 originated the concept of the stock uniform. For several decades the latter company offered affordable and functional garments for the public-safety service sector that were designed to reflect pride and tradition.

In rebranding Horace Small as The Force, VF Imagewear says it is attempting to combine the strength and heritage of the former company with "a new focus on the precise needs of today's law enforcement professional."

The unwavering commitment to The Force brand is evident in endeavors including its Positive Force Award campaign. Taking daily nominations, the accolade honors officers throughout the year who have distinguished themselves, their departments and profession through extraordinary acts while also exemplifying valor, community service and notable contributions to society. Past recipients include Brian Bobick, a Washington, DC, officer who selflessly pushed his partner out of the way of a speeding car (driven by a juvenile who was specifically targeting the officers because of his disdain for law enforcement). Bobick took the full impact himself and was critically injured but has almost completed a full recovery in preparing to return to the line of duty. Another previous winner is Ken Hammond, the off-duty police officer who heroically intervened during the deadly Salt Lake City mall shooting incident in 2007; although five lives were taken prior to his involvement his quick actions undoubtedly saved the lives of countless others.

VF Imagewear's dedication to The Force, whose 2009 catalog spans 60 pages, is also readily apparent with its attention to detail in designing multiple features into all its clothing for law enforcement professionals. One such product, for instance, is its recently unveiled "Enforcer Jacket." The garment has an outer shell comprised of a wind-proof, waterproof and breathable membrane, with durable water resistance (DWR) finishes to ensure a



The Enforcer Jacket includes sleeve pockets like the one pictured for quick access to back-up weapons — a testament to the attention to detail in the design of clothing produced by The Force. Offering a countless array of features specifically designed for law enforcement, "The Enforcer Jacket," made by VF Imagewear's The Force, is composed of nylon and also utilizes PrimaLoft insulation for year-round wear.

long life for the garment. Features include drop down panels, reflective (3M Scotchlite) arm bands for night-time visibility and a sleeve pocket for quick access to backup weapons.

The Enforcer even has been tailored with a shorter fit that extends just above an officer's duty belt, with no slide flaps to catch on a radio, baton or handgun. It also offers a removable insulation liner made with PrimaLoft for lightweight warmth. According to The Force, the PrimaLoft synthetic loft insulation that is utilized possesses among the highest "Clo" values (typically used to measure clothing's warmth) despite being ultra-light weight. The jacket's properties ensure that it can be worn all season for police officers.

"It's obvious we're striving to do more than just sell product," says Shannon North, senior merchandise manager of VF Imagewear, in discussing The Force product line. "We're doing everything we can each day to serve the needs of the public safety service sector. ...We're a brand that's 'Made for Heroes.'" ◀

Coldwater Creek

HEADQUARTERS: Sandpoint, ID | www.coldwatercreek.com

NOMINATED BY: SAP | www.sap.com

Coldwater Creek, founded on the shores of a pristine lake in north Idaho, began in 1984 as a one-phone home-based mail order business, with merchandise initially warehoused in a stuffed closet.

Today, Coldwater Creek is a publicly traded 390-store chain with 10,000 employees. The home office has grown to a 20-acre campus in the region surrounded by broad mountain vistas — and it is clear based on several green initiatives undertaken by the company (which specializes in women's apparel, jewelry, accessories and gifts), that it has neither forgotten its humble origins nor its calling as an environmental steward, giving back to an earth that has been reciprocally bountiful.

The company was a pioneer in the Renewable Energy Certificate (REC) purchasing program, and has been repeatedly recognized by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in its Energy Partnership Program. Beginning in 2006, the company purchased RECs to offset 100 percent of its energy use through 2009 — that is it purchased “green tags” allocated toward the same amount of renewable electricity that was consumed (thus sup-

porting green energy). This year, it has redirected its REC investment to support its Green Retrofit Program, to replace older, inefficient systems with high efficiency equipment, and to install more green materials through the chain's older stores during retrofits and remodels.

The list of the company's other environmental sustainability efforts is lengthy and impressive. It includes a chain-wide light bulb recycling program, elimination of VOC paint products, installing high-efficiency HVAC units with CO₂ sensors in all new stores, installing energy management systems in all stores and working with international manufacturers to ensure transparency in the production of company merchandise.

Coldwater Creek is an active member of the United States Green Building Council's (USGBC) LEED for Retail pilot program and to date has built 12 specialty retail stores (averaging 6,000 square feet) that have been LEED Certified, with five of those stores being awarded gold certification. (It continues to build more this year.) ◀

American Eagle

HEADQUARTERS: Pittsburgh, PA | www.ae.com

NOMINATED BY: Manhattan Associates | www.manh.com

American Eagle, the leading lifestyle retailer that designs, markets and sells its own brand of casual, fashion-forward clothing to 15-to-25-year-olds, knows firsthand that keeping merchandise fresh and well-stocked for such a choosy demographic is a never-ending challenge.

Recognizing that a fine-tuned supply chain is critical as it caters to its young target audience, the publicly traded company implemented Manhattan Associates' warehouse management and distributed order management solutions that, according to the retailer, have enabled it to reduce inventory by \$4.5 million annually and have provided scalability that have kept pace with remarkable growth. Whereas in 1999, American Eagle had approximately 400 stores, the company claimed 1,101 stores across three brands (American Eagle Outfitters, Aerie and Martin + Osa) in November 2008 and \$3 billion in revenues for the most recent fiscal year.

The Manhattan Associates technology was implemented for its three warehouses in Warrendale, PA; Ottawa, KS; and Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. Prior to implementing the solutions, American Eagle ran three shifts per day, Monday through Friday, plus numerous Saturday shifts. Today, it ships orders in just two shifts per day (Monday through Friday), due to soaring productivity, and only operates on weekends during peak periods. The improvements have resulted in \$680,000 savings in annual productivity, according to American Eagle, which also notes shipping accuracy has jumped to 99.8 percent.

American Eagle reports product is now turned around more quickly than ever, for put-to-store orders, break-case orders and cross-docking of ship direct (full case) orders. Previously, only 10 percent of goods were cross-docked but, because of efficiencies yielded from the implementation of the Manhattan Associates' solutions, the figure has increased between 25 percent and 50 percent.

The retailer continues to strive to further decrease the amount of inventory put into reserve, and has set a goal to increase flow-through merchandise from 60 percent to 80 percent to 70 percent to 90 percent. American Eagle also has achieved 95 percent to 97 percent vendor compliance, but is focusing on driving the number higher.

These days, American Eagle's third-party facility, managed by National Logistics (a subsidiary of American Eagle) in Canada, is taking on additional retail clients and the retailer is considering the possibility of self-managing its direct-to-consumer business, currently outsourced to a third-party provider.

"Manhattan Associates has proven to be the consummate partner to help us create a leading edge logistics operation and distribution model to support our consistent growth," says Steve Lyman, senior director of logistics for American Eagle. ◀

The Shoe Company

HEADQUARTERS: Toronto, Ontario, Canada | www.theshoecompany.com

NOMINATED BY: Opterus | www.opterus.com

The Shoe Company was facing challenges similar to most retailers: limited resources, competing demands on management time, limited management skills and autonomous management with minimal direct supervision. The company needed a solution to accommodate the high volume of communication taking place between the head office and its 70 retail stores.

The Shoe Company partnered with Opterus Inc. to implement its Store Ops-Center solution, which allows the company to access real-time information regarding how its 1,200 employees are executing, all on a store-by-store basis.

The Shoe Company contributed ideas for features and functionality of the solution. One specific example is that of "Gate Keeper" in the Store Ops-Center. It was important to the company to have multiple content creators at the head office, but it did not want to make messages and tasks available to the stores instantly without some kind of check in place.

"With current solutions, like e-mail, you can flood a store manager with e-mails that would take longer than a day to read through, let alone act



The Shoe Company has implemented a store-operations solution from Opterus to accommodate the high volume of communication taking place between its head office and its 70 retail stores.

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on," says Lewis Feinstein, vice president of operations. The Gate Keeper is an approval process that ensures what is viewable by the stores is clear and consistent. Content creators may require Gate Keeper approval, while some others may have permission to have their messages and tasks viewable by the stores without that approval step.

All reports are now available real time, on demand. "The ones we look at most often are the exception reports around overdue tasks and unread messages," says Feinstein. "We can now manage compliance to corporate strategies and execution very easily."

The Shoe Company recognized that that for some retailers, there is a disconnect between the technologies that it provides its employees and how employees actually want to use the technology. "We found that most of our employees are used to some kind of social networking tool and welcomed the new technology," says Feinstein. "It gave them a way to receive information and log issues that was familiar, more efficient and was a welcome change to old paper/mail/fax methods."

Since implementing Store Ops-Center, the company has significantly cut costs and increased operational efficiency throughout its entire enterprise. Expenses were reduced through productivity improvements, and sales increased due to improved store compliance and head office support. Productivity improvements experienced throughout the organization averaged 20 percent.

Store personnel are provided with clear, concise and timely direction, along with the proper tools to best do their jobs to support corporate initiatives.

The application was designed using best practices of Web 2.0 architecture and software development. By using technologies such as Ajax and JavaScript, Store Ops-Center can be run over low bandwidth network connections as well as broadband. The solution gives The Shoe Company an innovative and alternative way to communicate head office strategies, ensuring that communications are being read by the right people, store-level tasks are being executed as they should be, and that stores are compliant with corporate objectives.

Looking forward, The Shoe Company plans to continue to invest in cutting-edge solutions to make its operations more successful, and is currently implementing a new survey solution and a customer loyalty program.

"We are focusing on customer loyalty and retention and have gone to an electronic loyalty program and data base," says Feinstein. "We are also conducting online surveys to help us understand what our customers like or dislike about their shopping experiences. In responding to this information, we believe that loyalty and retention will increase along with our average basket size at the check out." ◀

FesslerUSA

HEADQUARTERS: Orwigsburg, PA | www.fesslerusa.com

NOMINATED BY: Gerber Technology | www.gerbertechnology.com
CGS/BlueCherry | www.cgsinc.com



In these challenging economic times, illuminated by an obliterated American manufacturing base, FesslerUSA, a leading niche provider of high-end private-label fashion knitwear, has been lauded and acclaimed, looked up to as evidence that American producers can indeed compete globally (and even thrive).

Yet the family-owned and operated company, which commenced operations in 1900 and survived the Great Depression and two World Wars, has attributed its success and survival not to its consistency and continuity but to its adaptability.

The company's aptitude for progressing and changing with the times is unmistakably conspicuous with its recent move to a 150,000-square-foot facility in nearby

Deer Lake, PA, expected to be one of the largest solar panel-powered buildings on the East Coast. The solar-powered facility, free from fossil-fuel dependence, is projected to be fully functional next year. Although the project is an acknowledged challenge (relying on green energy to power its array of energy-intensive knitting and sewing operations), the move is expected to make it more efficient and competitive in the long term, especially considering volatile energy prices.

The green facility, which will consolidate all of FesslerUSA's departments under one roof, boldly demonstrates the firm's commitment to sustainability in recent years. The company's client base of high-end brands and retailers exceeds 100 and includes Urban Outfitters and Nordstrom.

In recent years, more than 30 of its clients have relied on FesslerUSA for its assort-



Pictured here are Fessler CEO Walter Meck and his son, Brian Meck, vice president of sales and marketing.

ment of eco-friendly fabrics made from organic cotton and other sustainable fibers, including bamboo and recycled polyester. The fibers and fabrics it uses originate in the United States, and this strategy has enabled it to lower its carbon footprint.

As part of its comprehensive sustainability program, developed by company COO and chief sustainability officer Bonnie Meck, the company is investing in T5 lighting, reflective paint and energy efficient HVAC throughout its facility. It

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is also aggressively pursuing waste minimization and recycling opportunities, and using local vendors and contractors whenever available.

Beyond its sustainability success, FesslerUSA, which has reported growth of 15 percent annually in recent years, is utilizing all the apparent ingredients necessary to build a winning formula for thriving domestic operations.

When the firm recognized early that free trade would instigate an offshore exodus, the company shifted its focus from commodity garments to smaller brands and retailers targeting the higher end of the fashion spectrum.

FesslerUSA, which reports production of more than 4 million women's and children's

knit tops per year, then transformed itself to a vertical "one-stop" operation for designers and retailers, offering customers a complete range of services, from helping customers develop a design to also providing domestic fabrics, cutting, knitting, sewing, brand consulting and shipping. It provides a design support team and a technical staff, which eliminates the need for some of its smaller customers to have those in-house resources.

Speed to market has also been a company hallmark, especially in light of long turnaround times overseas: "We take a concept and have it on the shelf within 60 days," says vice president of sales and marketing Brian Meck, who has helped spearhead the company push toward sustainability.

Under the leadership of the company's CEO Walter Meck (Brian's father), the company began the process a few years ago of updating all of its knitting machines and incorporating technology to gain further efficiencies. It also partners with Gerber Technology, which provides automation systems for pattern design, marker making, spreading, cutting and product specifications, in order for FesslerUSA to facilitate its quick response at lower costs.

As it continues to adapt with the times, it is clear that Fessler USA has built a sustainable business — in more ways than one. ◀

See CGS's ad on inside front cover.

Trophyline

HEADQUARTERS: Jasper, GA | www.trophylineusa.com

NOMINATED BY: Self

Trophyline, a provider of hunting gear, is known for its innovative solutions in creating and producing products that fill a void in the marketplace. The company makes it a goal to enhance the sport of hunting by providing safe products and promoting responsible hunting.

Recently, the company developed new patented safety harness technology dubbed Fall Arrest Technology™, which was incorporated into two models of its Body Armour® harnesses: ArmourLite and Gadget Extreme. These products have industrial as well as recreational application.

Fall Arrest Technology was developed by company president Sherry Green, who "went back to the drawing board," studying and identifying the elements of a fall in a conventional harness, and designed the new products to minimize the risks associated with each element of a fall, says Kimberly Krebs, administrative assistant, AP/AR.

The new technology consists of: 1) The Decelerator Pack, which reduces the arrest force in the event of a fall. It reduces the impact force of a fall by half vs. that of most other safety harnesses, by functioning in a similar way to a parachute drop; and 2) The Suspension Relief Seat (SRS)™,

which provides an area over which the wearer's weight is distributed after a fall — something akin to a playground swing. This contrasts with other harnesses, which leave the employees hanging in the harness by their torsos, while circulation is being cut off by the leg straps. Because of the life-threatening situation this poses, OSHA requires that employees using these harnesses be rescued immediately, whereas Trophyline harnesses give the wearers time to wait for help without putting their lives in jeopardy.

These two harnesses were introduced in 2008 and won Best New Product of the Year by Nation's Best Sports, the largest-volume sporting goods buying group in North America.

The new harnesses were designed not only to minimize the risks in each individual element of a fall, but include a myriad of highly functional gadgetry. Both harnesses have "gadget retractors" (one on the ArmourLite; four on the Gadget Extreme) onto which tools can be secured. This allows the wearer to use the tools without the risk of dropping or losing them.

Two of the retractors feature a "gadget gear band" that allows for placement around



Trophyline recently unveiled new safety harnesses featuring the company's patented Fall Arrest Technology, which minimize the risks associated with falling while using a safety harness.

items such as a cell phone, walkie talkie or game call. Gadget retractors are especially helpful when working out in the field or when working from heights.

The Gadget Extreme was also designed to conform to the body, and has "side body elastic," allowing the wearer to keep things close to the body vs. hanging loosely, which presents a safety hazard. This harness also features eight ergonomically designed pockets, two with gear loops, offering a place for everything. ◀

Please Mum

HEADQUARTERS: Vancouver, BC | www.pleasemum.com

NOMINATED BY: Lectra | www.lectra.com

For more than 20 years, Canadian children's wear manufacturer Please Mum has been creating innovative garments for newborns to age 10 with a focus on quality and ease of care.

The company has 90 stores across Canada, and employs 1,000, including 150 in its Vancouver headquarters. In addition to its four annual major seasonal collections, Please Mum also ships small deliveries of entirely new designs to its boutique-style shops every month. Its designers take inspiration from European fashion trends, adding kid-friendly features such as "Double Trouble" knees and "Grow-Touches" that allow a garment to grow with the wearer.

Along with its entrepreneurial spirit, Please Mum is known for its speed to market and its innovation, as well as its award-winning philanthropic missions such as blood drives, disaster relief fundraising, and sponsorship of school music programs.

A company that "connects" with its customers, Please Mum is growing at a rate of 10 stores per year. The vertically integrated company designs every product in house. "We have a strong sense of commitment to quality, and set high standards, from color consistency to fit and fabric softness, in order to keep the customers coming back," says Stephen Lee, vice president of corporate development.

The quickly growing company wanted a solution that would improve its speed to market, reduce manual processes, increase supplier connectivity and centralize information, in order to have a viewable history of "how and why?" as well as being able to communicate and "speak one language."

The company implemented Lectra Fashion PLM and Kaledo Design Management to streamline processes and improve efficiency. The combined aspects of product data management and workflow management of the PLM system have allowed for better communication and more efficiency. "As a result, more information is shared and decisions are made faster," says Lee. "There is less opportunity for error, leaving much more time and energy to focus on moving forward effectively."

Lectra Kaledo Collection, which shares a common database platform with Lectra Fashion PLM, encourages artistic creativity while structuring the collection creation process and facilitating the exchange of internal and external information to the design environment.

As a result, Please Mum's designers are benefiting from improved productivity. What used to take a whole day to design can now be done in an hour. "The solution has now given them the ability to do real-time modifications, validation, collaboration and approval, allowing them to truly manage their collections," says Lee. ◀



To meet its goal of bringing kid-friendly yet fashionable children's wear to market in a timely manner, Please Mum implemented PLM and design management systems to streamline processes and improve efficiency.

JD Williams & Company Limited

HEADQUARTERS: Manchester, UK | www.jdwilliams.co.uk

NOMINATED BY: TradeStone Software | www.tradestonesoftware.com

JD Williams knows all about the multi-channel challenges involved in today's fast-fashion marketplace.

The UK's leading direct home shopping company operates more than 20 successful catalog brands, offering a huge selection of clothing and other products for all ages and sizes; it particularly specializes in larger-size women's wear and has more than 2 million customers. It produces 13 billion catalog pages per year and at any one time, their product offerings include 8,000 lines and 120,000 SKUs, all sold through more than 700 catalogs, 1,600 press offers and 45 web sites.

Now part of N Brown Group plc, the venerable company was founded by James David Williams, who, in 1882, was the first to make use of the UK's parcel post service, sending his company's products direct to his customers.

While Williams' formula of providing quality and value direct to consumers has obviously passed the test of time, the complications associated with the business today are much more pronounced; case in point: 80 percent of what the retailer sells is its own private label.

While recognizing online growth potential, JD Williams understands that its catalogs are



Marketing "gorgeous underwear for girls with curves," the Simply Yours catalog brand is one of more than 20 offered by JD Williams, whose product line at any one time includes 120,000 SKUs.

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still important for driving sales. Each of its catalogs had its own “critical path” timeline from concept to sale but previous systems could not communicate with each other. Additionally, its employees (which number in the thousands), as well as all of its suppliers and vendors, were operating from different spreadsheets.

To move forward, JD Williams selected TradeStone Software’s Merchandise Lifecycle Management suite of solutions to bring visibility and order to its supply chain while unifying and standardizing everyone on one simple easy-to-use system.

JD Williams reported numerous benefits including a vast reduction in the time it takes to develop and bring products to market, particularly critical in today’s fast-turnaround climate, and the retailer said it was able to boost its customer choices by



“To offer our range of products in a multi-channel retail market, we’re employing the latest and best technology,” says JD Williams CEO Alan White.

22 percent, resulting in sales increases across several catalogs.

The TradeStone Quality Management module in the suite enabled JD Williams to enhance accuracy of sample measurements — especially significant considering its considerable plus-sized client base. The component better communicated to suppliers what to expect at the source before shipping across the world. And because the TradeStone platform offers a dashboard with customizable language, time zone and currency information, JD Williams reported that its

Chinese suppliers found the solution much easier to adapt and use than they expected.

Moving forward, the company, with further implementations of the TradeStone solution, is anticipating to ramp up its target product ranges, promote sales growth and offer margin increases.

“Our mission statement states that our aims are to target niche customers with niche products,” says JD Williams CEO Alan White. “To offer our range of products in a multi-channel retail market, we’re employing the latest and best technology.” ◀

ITC Limited, Lifestyle Retailing Business Division

HEADQUARTERS: India | www.itcportal.com

NOMINATED BY: Lawson | www.Lawson.com

LAWSON

ITC, one of India’s foremost private-sector companies, is committed to building a dominant presence in the apparel market through a robust portfolio of offerings.

Its Lifestyle Retailing Business Division was created in 2000, and has established a nationwide retailing presence through its Wills Lifestyle chain of more than 50 exclusive specialty stores. Product lines include Wills Classic work wear, Wills Sport relaxed wear, Wills Clublife evening wear, and Wills Signature designer wear. ITC’s John Players brand offers a complete fashion wardrobe for today’s male youth, and Miss Players offers trendy clothing for young women.

Having built a powerful brand portfolio that is making waves across the country, ITC’s Lifestyle Retailing is poised for growth. The company, which is vertically integrated from manufacturing to retail, turned to Lawson to achieve its goal of becoming a truly customer-centric organization.

The company created an integrated infrastructure with Lawson M3 for Fashion at its heart. It has integrated Lawson M3, Lawson Fashion PLM, and Lawson Business Performance Warehouse.

“We operate in a very seasonal market with a large number of product variations,” says Atul Chand, CEO of ITC’s Lifestyle Retailing Business Division. “We design and produce many new products that are relevant only for a limited period. Hence, supply chain visibility and fast reaction times are crucial.”



ITC’s Lifestyle Retailing Business Division has established a nationwide retailing presence in India through its Wills Lifestyle chain of more than 50 exclusive specialty stores.

The Lawson solution was implemented as a “mission critical” system. “We have, as a result, transformed the way we run the business,” says Prabir Sengupta, vice president of finance and IT. “Without the integrated systems and processes, we wouldn’t be able to handle the variations and volumes so effectively.”

M3 was implemented across the whole of ITC’s Lifestyle Retailing Business by Lawson’s partner in India, Symphony Services. “Symphony added considerable value to the process. They clearly understood our needs,” said Sarkar. “The close working relationship between Symphony and us was one of the main reasons our users quickly realized the benefits of Lawson M3.” ▶

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Because many new products are designed that are relevant for only a limited amount of time, ITC's Lifestyle Retailing Business Division CEO Atul Chand says supply chain visibility and fast reaction times are crucial.

Whereas earlier the company was "flying blind," it now has total visibility at every detailed stage, from concept design to in-store purchase. Previously, when stores and customers placed an order with the warehouse, it could take days to execute, and fulfillment ratios varied between 50 percent and 60 percent. Supply chain reaction time and order fulfillment ratios have improved dramatically, with order fulfillment currently at 95 percent.

"We are able to respond almost instantaneously to individual customer needs," says Subhasis Sarkar, divisional CIO. "As a result, we are growing at a rate significantly higher than the industry standard. We are only able to do this because we have created end-to-end transparency at every point in the supply chain." ◀

See Lawson's ad on page 19.

Coolibar

HEADQUARTERS: St. Louis Park, MN | www.coolibar.com

NOMINATED BY: Micros-Retail | www.micros-retail.com

Coolibar's mission is to develop superior sun protective products that allow people to enjoy life in the sun.

The company was founded in 2001 to bring Australia's approaches to sun protection to the American market. The plan worked and Coolibar quickly developed a strong following.

The company has extensively redesigned Australian sun protective clothing styles to meet the tastes and needs of fashion and health-conscious Americans. Apparel and accessories are sold through its catalog and web site.

Coolibar's apparel is constructed to provide extraordinary UV protection, both through garment design and a unique range of proprietary fabrics named SUNTECT.

The company follows extremely rigorous testing standards to ensure that every Coolibar brand product provides UPF 50+ protection (the highest level of sun protection possible) for the life of the garment.

The result is comfortable, attractive clothing that is recommended by the Skin Cancer Foundation and is endorsed by the Melanoma International Foundation.

Many of the company's customers who have experienced sun-related health issues "have become passionate advocates for Coolibar clothing," says founder and president John Barrow.

As the company grew, however, its legacy order management system no longer handled its throughput. The company typically processed half its annual orders during three busy summer months. Every order required some level of manual credit card processing, and the company used one order management system for first-time customers and a different system for repeat customers.

In March 2008, Coolibar installed CWSerenade Order Management from Micros-Retail. Now the company not only handles higher volumes with ease and accuracy, it is able to manage all back-office functions with one solution.

Coolibar manages its merchandising, procurement, warehousing, call center, fulfillment, and certain performance analytics through CWSerenade, a single, centralized solution. Furthermore, Coolibar was able to use the solution without modification beyond the interfaces to existing financials and its web site.

"In our first year of operation, Coolibar was able to process a 25 percent increase in orders, with no increase in call-center staffing," says Barrow.

In planning for its second season with CWSerenade, the company has focused on



Founded eight years ago, Coolibar offers sun protective clothing, UV protection swimwear, sun hats, and sunscreen to help protect against UV rays that cause skin cancer; the company has successfully brought Australia's approaches to sun protection to the American marketplace.



Coolibar's apparel is constructed to provide extraordinary UV protection, both through garment design and a unique range of proprietary fabrics named SUNTECT.

gaining improvements in fulfillment accuracy and efficiency.

"We have prepared an infrastructure to support the strong growth that is expected to flow from continued product innovation and an expanding customer base," says Barrow.

It's a growing clientele that believes Coolibar clothing is changing lives. ◀

Boston Harbour

HEADQUARTERS: New York, NY | www.bostonharbour.net

NOMINATED BY: Creative Marketing Plus | www.creativemarketingplus.com

As costs rise and retailers place more downward price pressure on their suppliers, the focus on keeping prices at rock-bottom levels can be severe. In this environment, it is not unusual for workplace human rights issues to be swept under the table.

The goal of keeping prices low while producing top quality goods and conforming to high human rights standards is one that Boston Harbour, a manufacturer of own-brand and private-label high-quality men's and ladies' leather outerwear, refused to fall short of.

Company president Tom Lewis built strong relationships with his Chinese partners from the company's founding in 2000, and made it a priority to ensure that the employees in their factories work under acceptable conditions, receive decent wages, are provided with benefits and have access to medical information and care.

It's not all about the workers, however. Providing a decent quality of life pays dividends to his company in the form of workers that are better able and willing to focus on the job at hand. As a result, Boston Harbour has continually been able to produce top quality garments while keeping prices down and remaining profitable.

It sounds like a no-brainer, so why doesn't every company do this? The short answer is, it isn't easy. It requires time, energy and innovative thinking to develop a strong relationship with a factory and to find solutions that work, says Lewis. "The process to get a factory fully compliant takes years in many cases.

"I truly believe most factory owners want to do the right thing for their employees," he says. In his experience, most problems stem from a lack of understanding of the requests made by their customers or simply from not knowing where to obtain what is needed. Most factories simply don't understand what 'ergonomic' programs are or what first-aid equipment needs to be made available. Furthermore, "there is no CVS to go to and pick up an eye-wash kit," he quips.

Cultural differences and language barriers add to the difficulties, as do financial barriers. For the latter, there needs to be an openness to share in the costs associated with becoming compliant, says Lewis.

"For example, it was necessary for me to pay for electric hand dryers, as the towel idea was just not working. It was a small expenditure to eliminate a consistent battle: bathroom cleanliness."

Boston Harbour also works diligently to meet and discuss new programs with factory workers so they understand their impor-



Boston Harbour manufactures its own brands, Proshield and Harbour/One, and also provides products for major U.S. brands.

tance and the benefit to the workers. "It is difficult to keep your best workers, and it's important for them to understand that you really do want to make their lives better." If you can do that, he says, you have a much better chance of retaining them and keeping them from jumping ship for a few more dollars.

"Experience is one of most important elements in delivering quality products. I would rather spend more on benefits and less on new employee training."

In 2007, the company established a college scholarship program for the children of the company's factory workers, and the following year extended the program to include high school scholarships. (In China, free education is available only through the 10th grade.)

Lewis says his company is very fortunate that Boston Harbour's customers, including Macy's, Belk and Phillips-Van Heusen, remain focused on human rights issues and continue to "push us in the right direction," but he fears that this is not the case for many companies.

"Only 12 months ago, the conversations started with: 'Are your factories approved?' Now, they shift immediately to how to lower costs."

"In today's environment ... everyone is being pushed to achieve lower costs, but it is now that we need to be the most careful," he says. ◀



"We cannot allow ourselves as an industry to go backwards to protect or enhance the margins at the expense of the lowest paid people in the chain," says Tom Lewis, president of Boston Harbour.

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Jerry Leigh

HEADQUARTERS: Van Nuys, CA | www.jerryleigh.com

NOMINATED BY: New Generation Computing | www.ngcsoftware.com

Jerry Leigh is a design-driven apparel company that develops licensed products for the nation's top retailers. The company's implementation of NGC's e-SPS software for global sourcing demonstrates its innovation and relentless focus on customer satisfaction. Because Jerry Leigh designs and develops merchandise for many of the world's most recognized brands, including Disney, Warner Bros., Nickelodeon, Harajuku Lovers, Abbey Dawn, Paul Frank, Fender and Omni Peace, quality and timing are critical to the company's success.

"Some of the challenges we were facing were limited visibility throughout the production cycle, lack of communications that resulted in duplication of work, and no centralized product information," says Vickie Zaura, Jerry Leigh's information systems director.

The solution will help the company to streamline its production and improve communications with consumers and trading partners around the world.

"When our customers are developing new brand concepts and promotions, we have to be able to turn licensed products very quickly at our manufacturing opera-

tions in Asia and Central America," says Jeff Silver, vice president and CFO.

The solution is being rolled out across all four Jerry Leigh divisions for purchase order management, production tracking, quality, and inbound tracking and visibility. NGC's implementation experts are working closely with Jerry Leigh to ensure a successful software rollout. When it is complete, the company reports, it will be able to instantly exchange and update information with its worldwide supply chain partners, streamlining communications and improving collaboration.

The software's role-based calendars and dashboards will help ensure that critical deadlines are met and production problems are quickly resolved. "e-SPS will be invaluable for ensuring that Jerry Leigh continues to meet the increased demand for rapid turnaround and faster time to market," says Silver.

With the software implementation, Jerry Leigh can further ensure that the company's fresh, exciting designs result in great products that are delivered on time, on budget and with consistent quality. "We expect to see centralized information for reduction



A design-driven apparel company, Jerry Leigh develops merchandise for many of the world's most recognized brands, including Abbey Dawn, shown here.

of errors, real-time visibility throughout the production cycle, standardization of processes for all divisions, and reduction of production lifecycle time," says Zaura.

For the next phase of the project, Jerry Leigh is implementing NGC's e-PLM software. "This will extend the benefits of the software to the design and pre-production process, giving us real-time visibility at every phase of the product lifecycle," says Zaura. ◀



Founder Josh McGlothlin is pictured here bringing one of his hat designs to life. All hats are knitted on antique knitting and sewing machines powered by hand.

Dohm-Icebox

HEADQUARTERS: Longmont, CO

NOMINATED BY: Self | www.dohmhats.com

When it comes to innovation in sustainability, you might say that Dohm-Icebox really thinks outside the box. The 15-year-old company, founded by Josh McGlothlin, manufactures funky and fun wool hats for the ski set — or anyone who wants a funky and fun hat — and produces its products with the environment always top of mind. It also makes accessories and home décor.

In an age characterized by high-tech automation, the company stands out not only for its unique product but for its method of manufacture. It may be old-fashioned technology, but it's right on the mark when it comes to rethinking energy use: The company's knit hat line is crafted on antique knitting machines that are powered by hand.

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No two hats are alike — the “designs are as unique as the individual wearing them,” says Lori Baker, director of public relations — and each is comprised of world-class woolly yarns that are produced under the strictest environmental standards.

All hats are made in the United States at Longmont, CO, headquarters, where the company continually strives to lessen its footprint on the planet. In an effort to reduce waste, the company created an “upcycled” collection called Xob (pronounced /zob/; it is “box” spelled backwards), made from the pieces and parts of recycled wool and wool-blend sweaters from the thrift industry. Recycled polar fleece is used in the “no-itch” headbands, and the hats are accented with colorful merino wool boucle yarns.

To eliminate the waste stream from this process, the trimmings and scraps from its hat lines are now used to stuff Xob the Recycled Sweater Monkey, and for handcrafted appliqué on the monkeys. The sweater monkey is stuffed with the help of those from the Center for People with Disabilities, Boulder County.

In its packaging, the company uses recyclable plastic bags. Its Xob hangtags are comprised of 100 percent post-consumer waste printed with soy-based ink, while Dohm hangtags are 50 percent recycled post-consumer waste printed with veggie-based ink. Its catalogs are printed on mixed sources and certified by the For-



All of the company's hats are knitted with merino wool or wool mohair blend yarns. Dohm Icebox's products are sold throughout the United States and internationally. The trimmings and scraps from its hat lines are used for the stuffing in its Xob the Recycled Sweater Monkey, which are stuffed with the help of those from the Center for People with Disabilities, Boulder County.

est Stewardship Council (FSC), and its micro-weave labels contain 35 percent recycled milk jugs.

“We strive to create exceptionally high quality products that people can enjoy for years,” says Baker, adding: “We value our team at Dohm-Icebox. Their hard work and attention to detail have allowed us to get to where we are today. We are proud to support local businesses and charities and to have the opportunity to employ those with disabilities.” ◀

Theory

HEADQUARTERS: New York, NY | www.theory.com

NOMINATED BY: Sky IT Group | www.skyitgroup.com

In these turbulent financial times, companies have to be able to react faster than ever before to consumer trends. Theory, a designer and producer of modern clothing for women and men, has successfully met that challenge over its 12-history, but wanted to continue making sure it was making sound business decisions based on facts.

The vertical company recently implemented Skypad-SaaS Business Intelligence solution, developed by Sky IT Group, to analyze sell-through information from its retail customers and from company-owned stores.

"We spent a tremendous amount of time summarizing and analyzing raw sales data which led to delayed decisions," says Keitaro Shigemasa, Theory's chief information officer. "The Skypad solution automated these tasks so our sales and merchandising staff could spend more time providing solutions

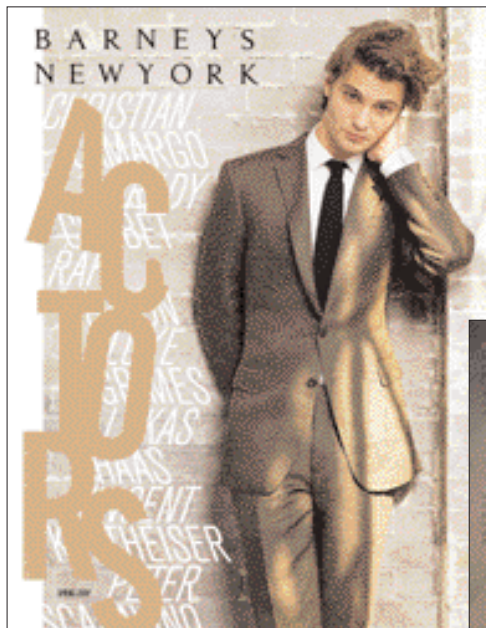
to our clients. The tool also enabled us to share information among our teams in a much easier fashion."

Theory was founded in 1997 on the principle that women wanted to feel comfortable and sexy in modern clothing. Placing a premium on fit and fabric quality, Theory created a collection that fused separates and outfits together.

The company capitalized on technological opportunities available to spin Lycra into other fabrics, creating slimmer, more comfortable shapes; the idea took off and Theory attracted a cult following. Following similar concepts, Theory launched its men's collection in 1999, bringing the same modern approach. The business expanded quickly, with Theory's availability spreading across the country, and, in 2000, to Asia. Theory opened its first retail stores in 2002 and soon launched in the European market.

Using Skypad, Theory's sales and merchandising executives compare trends and analyze the difference in profit margins between clothing sold through each channel. Based on this intelligence, the company can develop appropriate merchandising plans for the two different types of outlets, and ultimately increase sales, improve production, and react immediately to consumer buying trends.

Skypad offers a web-based solution that combines POS sell-through data provided by the major retailers, or company-owned stores, with shipments information. This combination of data is presented on Skypad dashboards, and allows merchandisers to view sales performance of their products, statistically and graphically, by any user-requested attribute down to the SKU level. ◀



Barneys' clients expect the same high level of style, product selection and service online that they experience in stores. New e-commerce systems are allowing the company to provide that experience.

Barneys New York

HEADQUARTERS: New York, NY | www.barneys.com

NOMINATED BY: Demandware | www.demandware.com

Barneys New York is synonymous with quintessential fashion, and clients of Barneys on Madison Avenue expect a high level of style, product selection and service. In order to offer the same exceptional brand experience online, Barneys decided to completely overhaul its e-commerce storefront with best-in-class back-end and front-end systems, including a new e-commerce platform.

The company's existing homegrown system did not provide the necessary flexibility and scalability to meet the needs of the company's aggressive e-commerce growth plans. "Flexibility, scalability and reliability were the major pain points of the existing platform," says Larry Promisel, Barneys' vice president of e-commerce. "The Barneys' marketers, merchandisers and creative team needed to own the experience without depending on technology and third parties."

Following an eight-month undertaking led by Promisel, in May 2008 Barneys launched



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a new barneys.com online store that more closely matches Barneys' awe-inspiring in-store experience. Barneys.com is now an extension of its brick-and-mortar stores, with its online windows adeptly complementing the famous Barneys' window designs.

Barneys selected Demandware as its strategic business partner for its new e-commerce initiative. Barneys sought an e-commerce platform that required limited technology resources and provided control and access to all layers of its web site. Merchandising, marketing and creative control were all paramount.

Demandware's on-demand e-commerce platform gives Barneys the flexibility to instantly control the user experience, and drive creative and targeted merchandising that helps its customers make educated buying decisions, all without having to involve the IT department each time a change needs to be made. It also enables Barneys to scale as needed across key holiday seasons and handle complex transactions, while providing the luxury retailer the ability to have full control over the day-to-day management of the site.

The ability to seamlessly manage content allows Barneys' marketers and merchandisers to focus their energies on providing customers with a highly engaging and captivating site experience. The new site includes: a common checkout for both barneys.com and barneyscoop.com; the ability to search and refine by attributes such as designer, color, and size; the capability to accept Barneys' private-label credit card; live order status check; custom sales tax implementation; and marketing integrations for e-mail and product feeds.

Barneys keeps its site at the forefront of style by incorporating the eccentric personality and insight of Simon Doonan, Barneys' creative director, via the Barneys Babble. Also, since the launch, the company has injected additional video and editorial components, re-architected templates including the home page, and integrated store events such as appearances, trunk shows and the Barneys New York Warehouse Sale.

The strategy is to further extend the experience with a combination of merchandising, marketing and editorial initiatives. Since re-launching its sites on the Demandware e-commerce platform, Barneys has measured significant increases in key website metrics. The scalable platform positions Barneys well for the continued growth and evolution of its e-commerce business.

Looking forward, Promisel says: "We will focus on enhancing the customer experience on a variety of levels including navigation, display, editorial, customer service and multi-channel initiatives. Our plans also include exploring emerging technologies and social networking and tying that in with the taste, luxury and humor of Barneys." ◀

Zappos

HEADQUARTERS: Henderson, NV | www.zappos.com

NOMINATED BY: Beehive Security Management | www.beehivesecurity.com

How did the popular Zappos emerge as the indisputable online shoe store giant, with more than \$1 billion in sales last year?

Led by its energetic CEO Tony Hsieh, the company, founded in 1999, attributes its success to a variety of factors, including a loyalty business model and innovative relationship marketing, outstanding customer service, and a rewarding, flourishing and unconventional corporate culture bordering on the zany. (After a week of training, for instance, new employees are offered \$2,000 to leave the company immediately, no strings attached. This is to ensure that people are there for the love of the job and not the money; reportedly, more than 97 percent turn down the buyout!)

The company, whose offerings have expanded to include handbags and other accessories, also has been lauded for its deployment of state-of-the-art systems,

including its innovative robot-operated distribution center in Louisville, KY. The “live” inventory system (rare in the industry) holds 1 million individual SKUs and 4 million items total. The system is tied intricately back to its e-commerce site as per company philosophy: Zappos eschews back orders to avert customer frustration, so whatever is on its web site reflects inventory on its shelves.

In the past year, Zappos implemented a robotic order fulfillment system from Kiva Systems that not only enhances customer satisfaction but also dramatically reduces the energy consumption associated with each order and optimizes worker efficiency, satisfaction (sometimes from working the robots) and safety.

The Kiva Mobile Fulfillment System, a fleet of robots, picks out shelf units from the warehouse and brings them to the

picker. Zappos can load apparel items on the truck 12 minutes after a customer enters an order online.

Beehive Security manages the IT infrastructure of Kiva Systems. Robot-operated storage also lends itself to easily configurable shelving, a key benefit cited by Zappos as it increasingly moves beyond shoes and into other merchandise.

Citing substantial improvements in key performance metrics from the Kiva system, Zappos is planning to make new storage areas robot operated for even further efficiencies.

Zappos, its 832,000-square-foot DC, and its use of the robot fulfillment system are all profiled in the January 2009 cover story of *Apparel* which can be accessed at www.apparelmag.com/zappos. ◀

Kidrobot

HEADQUARTERS: New York City, NY

NOMINATED BY: Simparel | www.simparel.com

With product offerings that leverage unique collector items and innovative designs, Kidrobot needed an ERP solution to manage high-velocity development-to-delivery cycles throughout its global supply chain.

Kidrobot (which also was profiled in the December 2008 issue as an *Apparel* All-Star Award winner) recently completed a highly successful implementation of its next generation ERP solution, working with Simparel to develop and implement a state-of-the-art global supply chain management system on time and on budget.

“From a B2B point of view, while EDI transmissions are still not in place with our customers, they will be shortly,” says Joe Zitomer, director of operations at Kidrobot. “We should see wholesale orders for

Kidrobot leverages its unique designs across a wide range of products, including apparel. The company recently implemented a new ERP solution to manage its high-velocity development-to-delivery cycles.

those customers increase by as much as 20 percent, especially because it will enable auto-replenishment interfacing with those customers.

“Turnaround times for B2C orders have improved by at least one day across the board,” says Zitomer. “With future additions to in-house technology, the Kidrobot shopping experience will only continue to improve.”

As a business solution, Kidrobot’s ERP system is flexible enough to bridge its



toy, apparel and accessory businesses. The company’s global supply chain management solution addresses a sales distribution strategy that leverages multiple channels of distribution (retail stores, wholesale customers, Web-based B2B, e-commerce B2C) for the same Kidrobot products.

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Kidrobot's diverse customer base includes a mix of department stores, specialty stores and consumers in both domestic and international markets, so its solution needed to accommodate various currencies and local compliance processes.

"The ability to react quickly to a changing marketplace has always been a challenge for the operational side of the business, because of our old systems limitations," says Zitomer.

The new ERP system, however, enables Kidrobot to effectively manage all changes to the business process in very short order, with relatively little expense, even if extensive programming changes are made. For example, credit card authorization rules were recently changed and automated for B2B customers.

"It took 20 hours of programming and was done in a week," says Zitomer. "Many other systems, including the previous sys-

tem Kidrobot used, would have required at least three times as many programming hours. And it would have taken well over a month to have the first test ready to go."

There are several next steps for Kidrobot. A new B2B module will be introduced that allows customers to enter orders into the system, and provides them with multiple reporting options, allowing them to better manage their business. "In addition, the ERP system will be linked to a new e-commerce platform, inclusive of a customer relationship management system," says Zitomer. "There are portals that will be opened up to allow freight forwarders and factories direct access into the Kidrobot ERP system, speeding up turnaround times and improving visibility of data with each set of partners." ◀



Pure Blanks Organic Fashion

HEADQUARTERS: Toronto, Ontario, Canada | www.shoppureblanks.com

NOMINATED BY: Butterfly Typhoon Pictures | www.btpix.ca

Founded in 2008, Pure Blanks Organic Fashion calls itself a "small business trying to make a big difference." The company launched its business with a vision of providing affordable prices, top quality and first-rate customer service for its fair trade and green products. The company offers clothing and accessories for men, women, babies and pets. Its target customer is in the 20-45 age range and prefers to buy sustainable and ethical products.

"He or she may not live a complete 'green lifestyle,' but may be making small changes such as recycling, buying organic produce and using energy efficient bulbs," says Adila Cokar, Pure Blanks' product development manager. "Our target market is retailers and companies that want to provide eco-friendly products for their customers, and are also interested in making a difference."

As a private-label manufacturer, Pure Blanks also works closely with companies that want to develop their own design and label. "Since we are located in North America, we work during the same hours and can work face-to-face with companies," says Cokar. "We manage production, on-time delivery and quality control, giving companies more time to focus on sales." Its minimums are low enough to allow start-up companies to place orders.

The company uses cotton grown in India, and to reduce its footprint, manufacturing is done in India as well. Because of the high demand for organic products for babies, Pure Blanks is launching a line of premium organic basics.

Because its organic cotton products use only certified eco-friendly dyes, all garments are hypoallergenic. "Because little children put everything in their mouths and suck it, for baby articles the Oeko-Tex Standard 100 also provides, in addition to extensive laboratory testing, a special simulated test to check the permanence of dyes and prints in saliva," says Cokar. "This means that no dyes will accidentally dissolve out of the textile and enter the body."

While most companies ship clothing with each garment sealed individually in a plastic bag, Pure Blanks ships 12 pieces per bag. In addition, its hangtags are made from recycled paper. "Our goal is to manufacture a high quality garment, which will hopefully be passed on to another person, and therefore reduce the speed at which it reaches landfills," says Cokar. "Our product lasts."

One of the company's unique design elements is a back neck label which tears out but keeps the size label permanently affixed, so that designers and businesses don't have to create their own company labels. Currently, Pure Blanks is creating a documentary for children about the organic cotton growing and manufacturing process, to be filmed in India, in order to spread the company's message of "opening your eyes to what green means."

"Increasingly, people have come to care about both what products they're buying and how those products are made," says Cokar. "They want to know that what they are buying doesn't have a negative effect on our planet. That's where we come in." ◀



Photo by Dave Chang.

Pure Blanks calls itself a "small company trying to make a big difference." It provides fair trade and green products at affordable prices, and focuses on the details, such as putting multiple garments in one bag.

Quaker Safety

HEADQUARTERS: Quakertown, PA | www.quakersafety.com

NOMINATED BY: Polygon Software | www.polypm.com

Quaker Safety, a domestic manufacturer of custom garments for structural and proximity fire fighting (its product is sold through a network of several hundred fire equipment distributors throughout North America), deployed Polygon Software's PolyPM, an integrated PLM and ERP solution, to achieve dramatic productivity improvements and error reduction.

"One reason we were looking for a new solution is we had a multitude of different software — we had accounting software and production software and they weren't connected," explains Lori Schantz, product manager at Quaker Safety. We use the finest raw materials available from the most recognized suppliers in the fire service industry. ... We chose PolyPM because it was all integrated."

The company requires that each garment has its own serial number. The purchaser can configure endless possibilities, resulting in each garment being completely unique, with a unique bill of material.

Errors are reduced with integration of order entry, serial number tracking, and a dynamic bill of material. With the new solution, costing is available for all styles and options, and garment serial numbers are tracked per order. Lot numbers of fabrics tracked per order through scanning, and inventory of finished goods are

easily accessible. Creation of garment shipping labels, modification of reports, updating of pricing and costing, order entry, and retrieving customers' previous specs all have been simplified.

"It really eliminated a lot of our redundant data entry," says Schantz. "We used to manually compile things, and we can now design our own forms and documents within the system."

The company can see how much of a raw material is required at any given time, without manually adding orders or physically counting inventory, and any shortages are flagged.

Purchase orders are easier to issue, and it can quickly be determined which POs are still open. Inventory tags are now printed within the system instead of handwritten, and inventory tracking is done within the system instead of manually.

As a small custom manufacturer, Quaker Safety was able to transform itself, allowing it to remain competitive while continuing to manufacture in the United States — no small feat.

"Going forward, we will be implementing some additional modules to help us increase our production control and tracking, as well as an online quoting/ordering system to help us with our customer support," says Schantz. ◀



Keryakos Inc.

HEADQUARTERS: Schenectady, NY | www.markacharlesfactorystore.com

NOMINATED BY: Thalhimer Headwear

After selling his Twin Rivers Textiles business, a state-of-the-art textile printing facility, which at one time produced more than seven million yards of high-quality wet process swim wear and active wear fabrics annually, Charles Contompasis says he found that the textile industry was "still in his blood."

Unable to tear himself away from the business, Contompasis dove back into the textile design and printing aspect of the industry, reviving his original business name, Keryakos Inc., as a new studio focused on producing "original, merchantable dyed and imaged fabrics and garments, in limited production, that create and do not limit design possibilities," he says.

Keryakos employs founder Charles Contompasis' patented Phly-Dye® process, which exhausts colors directly onto the fabric, with very limited effluent, and allows designs to move from file to production in minutes.

He began working to develop a new dyeing method that would allow for a wide range of extremely unique patterns to be printed on high-quality garments at a fraction of the cost of that incurred using current mass-production methods. Contompasis brought this plan to life by developing an environmentally friendly dyeing process called Phly-Dye®, which exhausts colors directly onto the fabric, with very limited effluent, and allows designs to move from file to production in minutes.

With his new process in hand, Contompasis and his sister Marika began producing their own label (MarikaCharles) of high-end fashion garments. The garments are specified and produced in white fiber (many come from *Apparel Innovator* Fessler, see p. 14), and then fully dyed and printed in a wide range of designs and colorways using wooden stamps or stencils developed based on Charles' designs, which he originates in Illustrator, Photoshop and other pro-

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grams. While Charles tackles the graphic design techniques, Marika handles the body styling and color schemes.

The company's printing and dyeing facility, based in Schenectady, NY, is a "miniature version of a traditional production plant," says Contompasis, that "designs and produces new patterns and dyed grounds, in minutes," he says, at a low cost.

The company's colorful and unique cashmere sweaters, silk scarves and t-shirts aren't inexpensive — a t-shirt will cost you upwards of \$100; a cashmere sweater more than \$300 — but com-

pared to similar high-end designs manufactured using other processes, it's a bargain, says Contompasis, who says that competitive product can run in the thousands of dollars.

The company's unique apparel can be found at prestigious retailers ranging from large department stores such as Bergdorf Goodman to small trendy boutiques such as Ron Herman and Fred Segal; it has found favor with a number of A-list celebrities as well. ◀

Indigenous Designs

HEADQUARTERS: Santa Rosa, CA | www.indigenousdesigns.com

NOMINATED BY: On the Horizon Communications | www.thepressroom.com

In 1994, Indigenous set out to design fashions that "honor both people and the planet." The company made a commitment to use only all-natural and certified organic fibers, and to organize fair trade cooperatives in remote regions of the globe considered impoverished due to a limited market and unattainable resources to scale. Fifteen years later, Indigenous is considered the authentic pioneer of organic, fair-trade apparel.

While its fashions are now readily available in high-end boutiques and upscale chain retailers throughout the United States, every Indigenous garment is still made by hand in a process that uniquely pairs emerging fashion with cultural and environmental preservation. Without sweatshops or conventional assembly lines, each Indigenous garment is hand-crafted with impeccable detail, while making a positive impact on the lives of those involved in its creation.

"Over 14 years ago when we started out, folks barely identified with the concept of organic food, let alone organic fashion," says CEO Scott Leonard. "Back then, many people thought we were crazy, but we persistently held to our vision. We are proud that we have been able to stay on message since our inception, and follow through on our mandate to honor both people and the planet. We are still holding to these same principles today."

In partnership with foundations and nonprofit organizations, Indigenous continues to improve the labor skills and production capacities of artisans through education and organizational training in each area of production. The production model provides the artisans with the necessary skills to produce more difficult knits and therefore to be paid more for their efforts.

Indigenous' unique partnerships support better working conditions for the artisans through organizing knitting workshops, providing clean facilities, and creating sustainable demand in the international market.

"We have embraced fair trade and sustainable business values in our company for all these years," says president Matt Reynolds. "We also had a commitment to be a catalyst for eco change in



Indigenous, truly a pioneer of organic, fair-trade apparel, has proven that women can be stylish and 'green' at the same time. Every Indigenous garment is made by hand in a process that uniquely pairs emerging fashion with cultural and environmental preservation.



the apparel industry. Being an authentic pioneer in this category is the one component that sets Indigenous apart from some of today's new green apparel companies."

Indigenous continues to refine its fashion collections, with eight distinctive collections for fall 2009, offering eclectic urban flavor, subtly ethnic handcrafted details and proprietary organic fiber blends. The collections can be interchangeably styled for the workplace or the weekend with versatile, easy-to-wear contemporary silhouettes that appeal to a variety of women. Indigenous gives women the chance to embrace their green values, impact the lives of others and be stylish, all at the same time.

"As much as we love to promote the green lifestyle and our commitment to following fair trade values, we know that the fashion consumer is ultimately seeking something stylish, and that's been crucial to the longevity of the brand," says Leonard. "The line demonstrates that you can walk a green path without sacrificing beauty and style." ◀

Wolverine

HEADQUARTERS: Rockford, MI | www.wolverine.com

NOMINATED BY: OOBEE | www.oobe.com

Although it has been a pioneer in the work and rugged outdoor footwear industry since 1883, Wolverine recognized the value of outside help when it extended its brand and expanded into the apparel business a few years ago.

It immediately partnered with stalwart vendors and brands in the industry including 3M, Ciba and Polartec to create functional and comfortable apparel for work and recreation.

The strategy paid off. In 2008, for instance, it integrated 3M's Scotchlite reflective taping into a new "Hi Vis" collection that includes vests, long- and short-sleeve t-shirts, hooded sweatshirts, rain suits and jackets. The move proved to be ahead of the curve with the needs of today's road workers, as later that year, the Federal Highway Administration established sweeping ANSI/ISEA requirements for road worker apparel. Through Wolverine's forward thinking, the Hi Vis apparel had already satisfied the requirements and was in the marketplace when the new regulations went into effect.

With Polartec, Wolverine has designed a head-to-toe collection of men's apparel including the Pioneer, a best-selling water- and wind-resistant jacket made with Polartec WindPro Fleece. Other innovative offerings by Wolverine include a convertible fishing shirt with a UPF rating of 30 for sun protection.

Another cornerstone partnership with Greenville, SC-based OOBEE — a versatile apparel design and manufacturing company with a broad range of clients and comprehensive services including apparel design, manufacturing and customer support — has helped Wolverine meet all its visions.

Realizing the significant supply chain investment it would take to assemble and coordinate all the necessary design and production resources, Wolverine contracted with OOBEE to produce its apparel lines. The vendor partnership in turn enabled Wolverine to focus its energies strictly on long-established core competencies in sales and distribution.

For Wolverine, the marriage of apparel with its footwear as well as the union with OOBEE proved to be fruitful: in fact, its shoe and boot sales increased by 11 percent to 15 percent in those stores that decided to carry its apparel line.

"While that original work consumer remains a valuable part of their business, the brand is always looking to the future," notes Paulette Disburg, OOBEE senior product manager. "As their design partner we see an openness for new ideas that still stay true to the Wolverine name." ◀

Elie Tahari

HEADQUARTERS: New York, NY | www.elietahari.com

NOMINATED BY: IBM | www.ibm.com

Elie Tahari, a privately held, high-end global lifestyle brand, was faced with intensifying competition as well as the global expansion of its business, and sought solutions to drive business efficiencies and cut supply chain costs while continuing to grow its loyal customer base.

Elie Tahari identified numerous inefficiencies in its processes that were ultimately costing it time and money. For example, employees often had to run several reports from different systems and try to manually piece the information together to make sense of trends and market demands as well as gauge product availability.

This was not only time consuming but also left room for errors and cost overruns, because the combined information was never put together in a timely manner. By

the time manual reports were compiled, a lot of new data had been generated or changed in the systems, rendering the manually prepared spreadsheets obsolete. This made it very difficult for managers to maintain an accurate view of inventory or to ensure that stock was delivered at the right time and in the right quantities to capitalize on sales opportunities.

To eliminate these problems, the company selected IBM's Cognos business intelligence software to provide it with complete visibility into all of its data, from sales to production, and help all systems and departments to better connect with one another in near real time.

To date, the solution has helped Elie Tahari employees gain better visibility into all of its critical business information, such

as trends around customer orders, says Nihad Aytaman, the company's director of business applications. The software helps identify best-selling sizes across product lines, popularity and demand for a particular item, or colors in fashion for the season, for example.

Because reports are no longer generated manually, errors have been reduced. Information that previously took days to pass from one department to another now is updated every five minutes and can be viewed simultaneously by all departments across the company's global locations.

With this real-time access to information, retail managers, designers and merchandisers now have detailed information about buying patterns as well as market trends. This improves their ability to deliver

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an optimal assortment of merchandise to customers while minimizing production and distribution costs.

For instance, using online access to the company's key transactional systems — orders, warehouse, financials, production, point-of-sale and channel sales — sales associates searching for specific stock can now quickly pinpoint a needed item, determine its location, and order a new shipment, to minimize the financial impact of an out-of-stock inventory position.

Additionally, employees can use the system to determine if a particular garment is off schedule. With instant access to a consolidated view of production, sales and distribution records, they can more readily anticipate inventory problems and plan accordingly before the business is negatively impacted.

From an environmental perspective, the online information access has reduced the need to print reports and manually compile spreadsheet-based information, allow-

ing the company to significantly cut down on printing and paper usage costs.

With the efficiencies that have been brought into its day-to-day transactions, Elie Tahari saves millions of dollars annually, says Aytaman, adding that the system has paid for itself many times over, and helped the company position itself "better than the competition by creating brand loyalty for our products." ◀

J. Barbour & Sons Ltd.

HEADQUARTERS: Simonside, South Shields, United Kingdom | www.barbour.com

NOMINATED BY: Lawson | www.lawson.com

LAWSON

In Great Britain, the name Barbour is practically as iconic of a household name as Wimbledon.

J. Barbour & Sons Ltd., a fourth-generation clothing manufacturer founded in 1894, is best known for making waterproof and outdoor clothing often associated with the sport of hunting. The firm prides itself on its reputation for high-quality clothing. Its legendary "waxed jackets," those hip-length raincoats evocative of British life, often stay in families to be passed down and worn for decades (an in-house shop offering complimentary repair service often helps ensure that longevity). In addition, Barbour holds "warrants" to supply waterproof and protective apparel to Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Charles, among others in the royal family.

The company was founded in 1894 by John Barbour, who began selling oilskins in the port of South Shields. The company says it remains true to its core values as a family business "which espouses the unique values of the British countryside and brings the qualities of wit, grit and glamour to its beautiful functional clothing."

But in recent years, the Barbour model has become increasingly vertical, and the company now sources around the globe; additionally it has increasingly expanded



its retailing operations and broadened its lifestyle range — appealing to a younger and more stylish customer, yet maintaining the countryside range for which it is renowned. Barbour now has eight of its own retail shops in the UK, and claims a presence in 40 countries including Germany, Holland, Austria, France, the United States, Italy, Spain, Argentina, New Zealand and Japan.

Suffice it to say, its business processes have become much more highly complex, compelling Barbour to replace its old in-house systems. Demand planning, sourcing and inventory visibility were among the

As Barbour's latest collection suggests, the vertical company headquartered in the United Kingdom has broadened its lifestyle range, appealing to a younger and more stylish target market, although it still maintains its classic heritage.

key areas where Barbour felt it could harness IT to improve efficiencies while protecting high customer-service levels.

After a lengthy evaluation process, Barbour recently selected Lawson's Quickstep Fashion and plans to implement a selection of additional applications from the solutions provider (among the list are Demand Planner, Supply Chain Planner, Lawson Warehouse Mobility and Lawson Smart Office). Lawson Quickstep Fashion, which runs on an IBM System I platform, is designed for scalability and implementation; according to the vendor it pre-configures more than 70 percent of core fashion industry processes.

"This made Lawson a great fit for our business," says Brenda Readman-Bell, Barbour's IT director. "Lawson Quickstep Fashion combines industry specific-content with built-in business tools based on Lawson's experience and knowledge of the fashion industry. Lawson is able to offer a lower cost of ownership and faster implementation times with the Quick Step Solution and we're already on the way to achieving this." ◀

See Lawson's ad on page 19.

Guess Inc.

HEADQUARTERS: Los Angeles, CA | www.guessinc.com

NOMINATED BY: Dassault Systèmes ENOVIA | www.3ds.com
Walter Wilhelm Associates | www.walterwilhelmassoc.com

With more than 750 retail stores globally Guess (styled as GUESS?) is considered one of the most widely recognized brands, producing innovative, stylish, fashion-forward apparel, accessories and lifestyle products for men, women, children and babies.

And in the past few years, the retailer known for its sexy marketing has embarked on an ambitious program to expand the brand and its retail presence in Europe, Asia and the United States simultaneously. The challenges are pronounced: with sourcing operations throughout the world, Guess must provide information such as color codes and style numbers to suppliers who all speak different languages. The company is intent on harmonizing all the colors, styles and fabric information across the enterprise (and the globe) to ensure consistency.

To pull it off, Guess is refining its entire supply chain. The initiative also requires that overseas suppliers and contractors “buy in” and make a serious commitment to the plan.

The company has been a longtime customer of ENOVIA’s PLM solution and Guess CIO Mike Relich subscribes to the vendor’s vision of a unified platform for sourcing and product development, sharing the belief that optimizing the company’s sourcing network and having full visibility over materials and sourcing options can dramatically impact the bottom line (an even more profound objective in today’s depressed economic climate).

And in today’s accelerating fashion climate that demands change faster than ever, Guess seeks to link its creative fashion teams with the production side of the business.

To meet its goals, the company invested in another solution from ENOVIA, the ENOVIA Apparel Accelerator for Sourcing and Production. Jointly developed with Wing Tai’s Zymmetry Group, a manufacturing and sourcing solutions provider focused on the apparel industry, the solution offers visibility and process control for brand and retail global operations. Guess is also expanding its deployment of ENOVIA V6 PLM solution as the vehicle to harmonize all those colors, styles and fabric information.

“One of Guess’ core strengths is our ability to identify fashion trends, put the concept together, source it very quickly and have it in the store in time to meet consumer demand,” says Relich. “The ENOVIA apparel sourcing solution enables us to be a responsive and nimble fashion leader by seamlessly managing collaboration with our suppliers, production facilities and retail and wholesale locations.”

By improving information flow and communication with partners with this project, Guess is increasing lifecycle visibility and providing a clear coordinated flow of information between all parties.

And with everyone on the same page, the retailer proclaims it will also be able to drive the value of its brand — already considered one of the strongest in the world. ◀

Intersport France

HEADQUARTERS: Longjumeau, France | www.intersport.fr

NOMINATED BY: Centric Software | www.centricsoftware.com

Undaunted by the challenging economic climate, sporting goods retailer INTERSPORT France is boldly and successfully executing on a major initiative to enhance its profit margins and strengthen its global position in the apparel realm.

Recognizing that a changing retail landscape and evolving market needs have demonstrated escalating demand for high-value, private-label apparel product, the French company, with 500 sporting goods locations in the country (including 150 ski stores) recently set a lofty goal to double the turnover of its exclusive, private-label brands over the course of the next four years.

To facilitate its ambitious objective, INTERSPORT, which offers approximately 1,000 styles per season, recognized it needed a full PLM system, with ample evidence for that technology need all around it: for instance, each team in the organization, from design to shipping, had its own processes that hindered its bargaining power with suppliers. Information across the global supply chain was shared via numerous emails, spreadsheets and overnight packages. In addition, technical files lacked specificity that contributed to a time-consuming — and costly — sample development process.



Nicholas Thibault, an INTERSPORT manager who oversees development of the retailer's private label brands, says Centric's PLM solution was "right for our team."

Nicholas Thibault, exclusive brands business unit manager, led the search process for a PLM solution, marking the first time that technology in the company was selected from business-oriented personnel and not the IT department. "To get our collections into stores on schedule, we must have definitive samples or the entire season's delivery schedule can be affected," he noted. "Yet valuable time was being lost as we went back and forth with the suppliers, answering questions or requesting changes because we provided inconsistent information in our technical-design files."

Ultimately, the company turned to Centric Software, which specializes in PLM and sourcing solutions in the consumer goods and fashion industries, including those globally sourcing private label.

Working together analytically and closely, Centric tailored its Centric 8 PLM solution specifically for INTERSPORT with imple-

mentation commencing in September, shortly after selection. "Centric's system is surprisingly easy to use and was easy to implement," Thibault said. "The feedback from our product managers and suppliers has been very positive, and it has been extremely simple to learn and use by everyone."

The retailer is also realizing quantifiable results: product managers have reported a 20 percent improvement of their sample development process, and a marked reduction in private-label product development time has already been realized; with further usage and familiarity with the software efficiency improvements and savings are expected to be attained.

Thibault says the company plans to implement additional modules of Centric 8 to help it reach its four-year goal. "An on-time, on-scope PLM implementation is possible," he adds. "We did it with Centric." ◀

I Quantum

HEADQUARTERS: Milwaukee, WI | www.summitwired.com

NOMINATED BY: QIO Systems | www.qiosystems.com

Have you ever had the experience of arriving at the health club with all of your gear in your gym bag only to discover that your iPod is dead because you forgot to plug it into the battery charger the previous night? Steve Smith, co-founder of I Quantum, has been there.

"You feel like something is missing without your music," he says.

It was this type of personal experience, combined with the dawning realization that just about everyone these days is attached to some sort of device, that led Smith and company co-founder Paul Mayer to launch I Quantum, an apparel start-up that designs gadget-friendly athletic wear crafted to safely store music players while keeping cords out of the way.

Having also experienced, and observed, the discomfort and frustration associated with trying to work out while wires hung out everywhere, the partners focused not only on the aesthetics of hiding the wires from view, but also the comfort factor.



Apparel start-up I Quantum designs gadget-friendly athletic wear crafted to safely store music players while keeping cords out of the way. Pictured here are items from its IQ collection.

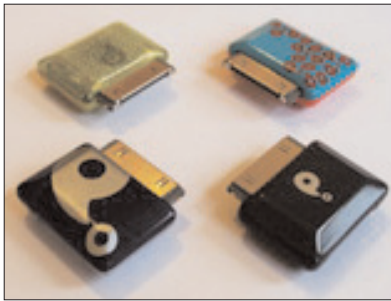
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Wires hanging out are not comfortable and can limit your range of mobility, says Mayer.

"We've designed our apparel so you are not seeing the wires, but our edge is how we applied it: it's sewn right into the garments."

To bring its idea to life, I Quantum partnered with QIO Systems, a wearable technology company offering interactive textile solutions, in the creation of two lines of gear. Its Summit Wired brand features a proprietary patented pocket design which, in concert with the QIO technology, offers apparel that manages cords with loops and channels.

The company's iQ collection builds on the cord management with built-in smart-fabric controls to allow wearers to play, pause and adjust the music volume without removing their iPods from their pockets. The control buttons are embroidered or silk-screened onto the sleeves such that they are barely visible but highly responsive to the touch.



As much as the founders are focused on technology, the point is that the customer shouldn't be. The founders' goal is that the music devices be so closely integrated with the apparel that wearers don't have to think about gear and wear as two separate entities. With I Quantum, the user wears the music. It's as simple as that.

"We are helping to redefine clothing as it relates to technology by creating a marriage between technology (QIO and Apple) and active, athletic apparel (iQ) to create

This photo shows the "iPod dongle," QIO System's PANiQ controller that plugs into an iPod to allow the wearer to control the device from the sleeve of his or her jacket or shirt. This can be used in all PANiQmode interactive clothing, which includes everything in I Quantum's iQ line.

Smart Clothing that is appealing, comfortable and user friendly," says Mayer.

The company's smart clothing was recently launched on the company's web site, with products including the iQ pullover hoodie (\$130), the basic cord-control workout shirt (\$28), and the iQ zippered hoodie (\$137.99) with smart controls wired into the sleeve. Smith says the company's goal is to expand into retail locations such as Kohl's, Macy's and Dicks' Sporting Goods, and into health clubs and university campuses.

Smith and Mayer say that their flexible manufacturing process will enable buyers to make up their own lines by choosing the colors and materials. Turnaround time on orders is between five and 10 days. ◀

Biflex Intimates Group

HEADQUARTERS: New York, NY | www.biflex.com (launching in June)

NOMINATED BY: GCS Software | www.gcsnet.com

Biflex Intimates Group is a U.S.-based supplier of brassieres, daywear and sleepwear for department, specialty, national chains and mass merchants. In 2006, Biflex, which has been in the intimate apparel business for over 50 years, was purchased from Kellwood by its senior management and a private equity group, Biflex Investment Partners.

The company's core expertise is supplying merchandise for the proprietary brands of its accounts, and it is a longstanding supplier to many of the largest American retailers including Wal-Mart, JC Penney, Dillard's, Sears, Catherine's and Belk. Its specialty is foundations and daywear; it offers a range of products that include basics, luxurious embroideries and laces, new technologies and fabrics such as bamboo. In addition, Biflex services its non-U.S. based accounts through its Hong Kong-based subsidiary, Biflex Worldwide.

After the acquisition, Biflex was required to implement a complete suite of busi-

ness applications, a completely new technical infrastructure, and build its own distribution capabilities in a very aggressive timeframe. After going through a software selection process, GCS Software's A2000 ERP was chosen because it provided a fully integrated, apparel-specific solution that eliminated the need to integrate with third-party warehouse management, financial, and EDI solutions which would have added significant time, cost, and risk to the implementation. Once A2000 was selected, the implementation was completed in five months. It was done in conjunction with transitioning the management of its 250,000-square-foot distribution operations to a third-party warehouse management provider, Genco Supply Chain Solutions.

After the initial conversion was complete, a major warehouse management improvement project was initiated that focused on general cost reduction, productivity improvements, inventory management, order ful-

fillment accuracy and sustainability. Biflex, working in partnership with GCS and Genco, has implemented a number of system and process changes in its two warehouses over the past two years that have led to significant improvements. Some examples include upgrading its WMS to make better use of handheld scanning and barcode technologies to improve inventory and order accuracy, better carton utilization to reduce the amount of corrugation required to fulfill an order, replacing the use of pallets with recyclable slip sheets whenever possible, and carton labeling at the manufacturing locations to reduce receiving costs.

"Changes such as these have resulted in Biflex experiencing double-digit reductions in cost per unit shipped and the amount of inventory required to support order fulfillment on a volume adjusted basis — all while being more environmentally friendly at the same time," says Scott Kingsley, vice president of logistics and information technology. ◀

Original Penguin

HEADQUARTERS: New York, NY | www.originalpenguin.com

NOMINATED BY: Perry Ellis International | www.pery.com

In 1955, Americans saw the introduction of the first iconic polo shirt — an Original Penguin, and it was an instant classic. The shirt was worn well into the 1980s by the likes of Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and Richard Nixon. In 2003, Perry Ellis International re-launched this iconic brand and in a very short time, Original Penguin has established itself as a top brand with an original, quirky personality. The brand was re-introduced to a younger, fashion-conscious consumer while staying true to its heritage. With five brand stores in the United States, Original Penguin is also sold at some of the top retail names in the country, including Barneys New York, Fred Segal and American Rag.

Original Penguin has become a favorite brand with taste makers such as Brad Pitt, Chris Rock and Judd Apatow. Its premium denim collection, introduced in fall 2006, is a vintage collection made in the United States for men and women, retailing from \$160 to \$300. Design details include classic hardware, an asymmetrical “tattooed” back pocket, leather patchwork and directional washes. Other new categories recently introduced include clothing for women, footwear, and ties. In the past year, Original Penguin has implemented an international strategy that is generating strong returns, with store openings in Buenos Aires, Argentina; Santiago, Chile; and most recently, Covent Gardens in London. ◀

Liverpool

HEADQUARTERS: Mexico City | www.liverpool.com.mx

NOMINATED BY: Unique Solutions | www.uniquescan.com

Buying clothes that fit and flatter without the stress of trying them on — that is precisely the experience that Mexico’s Liverpool, a department store chain offering branded merchandise in 74 stores across 38 cities, wanted to give its customers.

In the summer of 2008, Intellifit Mexico recommended that the company implement Unique/Intellifit’s Virtual Fitting Room solution. Liverpool saw an opportunity to help drive traffic to its stores and enhance the customer’s shopping experience through the solution’s 3D body scanner, which automates the process of measuring consumers and then matches them with garments that fit them best. With the sizing solutions software, customers walk away with a list of suggested shopping items by category, brand and size that best complement their silhouette type.

With an aggressive implementation plan, Intellifit Mexico assisted Liverpool with a pilot deployment at one store, with a single scanner. This enabled technical staff to build a specialized database and manually capture Liverpool’s vendor garment sizes, thus perfectly matching a customer’s body measurements with a vendor’s size scale. Since the rollout, Liverpool has scanned more than 30,000 of its customers.

For a one-month period in late 2008, customers were given a flower in exchange for their shopping list and purchase receipts. With this promotion, Liverpool was able to “romance” 18 percent of its scanned customer base back into the store, capturing measurements for 9,000 customers, with up to 400 customers scanned on a given day.

The average sales transaction totaled \$50, with approximately 2,000 transactions recorded during this period. As a result, Liverpool registered \$100,000 from a limited inventory period during the holiday season. Secondary benefits reported were increased sell-through, reduced markdowns, and the customer convenience of saving precious time while shopping. The company’s suppliers benefit from more accurate quantity and an optimized production schedule.

Both Unique/Intellifit and Intellifit Mexico played key roles in assisting Liverpool in achieving its business objectives. In order to ensure product and technical expertise, Unique/Intellifit provided Intellifit Mexico with in-depth training. Armed with this expertise, Intellifit Mexico will continue the



Liverpool saw an opportunity to help drive traffic to its stores and enhance the customer's shopping experience through the use of Unique/Intellifit's Virtual Fitting Room solution.

rollout to Liverpool’s remaining locations and provide technical, integration, support, project management and training services.

Looking forward, Liverpool is making further IT investments for handling electronic file transfers to eliminate the time-consuming and manual task of capturing garment measurements, and has enlisted its top 25 vendors to support this initiative. Liverpool hopes to continue to attract more customers into its stores, and believes that obtaining sizing information from customers will result in supply chain efficiencies — as well as increased customer satisfaction. ◀

New Era Cap Co.

HEADQUARTERS: Buffalo, NY | www.neweracap.com

NOMINATED BY: Celerant Technology | www.celerant.com

Baseball is ingrained as our national pastime. One of its prominent partners through its fabled history, the New Era Cap Company, has boasted a correspondingly proud and rich heritage of its own for nearly a century.

The cap pioneer was founded in 1920 by German immigrant Ehrardt Koch (it was known in its early years as E. Koch, as evidenced by vintage baseball photographs of caps highlighting the original brand). Today, the fast-growing headwear titan is the exclusive manufacturer and marketer of the official on-field cap worn by every Major League baseball team and all of their minor league affiliates. It also maintains agreements with other licensed entities including the NHL and NBA as well as with more than 200 colleges and universities.

Sweeping commercial success and recognition have followed, though the company has stayed true to its roots on many fronts: two years ago for instance, New Era moved its headquarters from the Buffalo, NY suburb of Derby to its new, renovated home in an old Federal Reserve building in downtown Buffalo, remaining in the region in support of the beleaguered economy there.

New Era Cap, however, has shown a willingness to change with the times to serve its customers. In 2007, it garnered considerable publicity when it changed the on-field cap in professional baseball for the first time in decades. Replacing its long-established wool caps, the company introduced new caps made of 100 percent performance polyester for moisture management.

Additionally, New Era has added apparel to its line and has also transitioned from a strict sports focus to a mainstream

brand as the company notes that it “can be seen on the runways of Paris during fashion week and in hundreds of music videos on MTV.”

The company recently decided to go vertical, launching an international chain of retail stores in major markets. It turned to Celerant to create an adaptable POS system to assist with that foray into retail. The company opened its first locations in Buffalo, New York City, Atlanta, Toronto, Berlin, London and Birmingham, England.

Celerant manages areas of the retail business from POS to inventory management, warehousing, distribution and allocation. It employs a Java platform that allows multiple locations to operate efficiently. Information is able to flow through an organization in real time, providing live, accurate data along with remote managerial visibility and control regardless of physical location.

With the assistance of Celerant, New Era retail planners were able to fine-tune their goals and POS requirements. “We were very clear with our direction and implementation needs,” says Cal Lawson, New Era’s retail operations manager for North America. “Over time, we recognized the necessity for developing controls and system tools ideal for our business.”

The multi-channel solution is also scalable: as the venerable cap company continues its evolution, this will be a key attribute to enable New Era to potentially add more stores as it grows — and write more chapters to its illustrious history. ◀



Topson Downs

HEADQUARTERS: Los Angeles, CA | www.topsondowns.com

NOMINATED BY: OptiTex USA | www.optitex.com

Founded in 1971, Topson Downs’ global operations now span three continents and nearly a dozen countries. The company got its start in the downtown Los Angeles fashion scene as a maker of juniors apparel, with all its operations in one small building, and gradually expanded into manufacturing worldwide. It has also expanded its brand offerings with the acquisition of fire in 2002, Southern California skate and lifestyle brand elwood in 2006 and women’s contemporary fashion line Tt in 2007.

Topson Downs’ product line today covers all categories of women’s apparel, ranging from mass-market private label to high-end contemporary fashion. With multiple distribution centers on both the West and East Coasts, its products are shipped across North America and Europe to customers including Wal-Mart, Target, Urban Outfitters, and Macy’s.

As its operations grew, Topson Downs found that its limited amount of CAD software was inadequate to meet its needs; the company was experiencing bottlenecks in production and limited delivery to its major customers.

As part of a new forward-thinking action plan to move beyond “doing business as usual,” the company recently implemented a solution from OptiTex. Although the company experienced a temporary slowdown during the implementation, it is now realizing the benefit of converting to the next level of CAD solutions, and as a result has almost tripled the dollar amount of software it had originally purchased from OptiTex, now deploying advanced nesting solutions to increase efficiency and reduce fabric waste. ◀

Hollander Home Fashions

HEADQUARTERS: Boca Raton, FL | www.hollander.com

NOMINATED BY: Middleberg Communications | www.middlebergcommunications.com

The nation's largest pillow manufacturer, Hollander Home Fashions, is setting the bar high for the home fashions industry by committing to an ambitious zero-waste goal for its manufacturing operations by 2010.

The company is taking a holistic approach to achieving this goal, looking at sustainability from multiple angles and engaging both employees and experts in the development of programs that will make zero-waste a reality.

Every aspect of the Hollander operation from product design and manufacturing to packaging and shipping is being touched by the new strategy.

For example, late last year, Hollander launched a new line of pillows made from recycled plastic bottles, which have since proved to be a hit with consumers at Wal-Mart and other retailers. This move alone has allowed Hollander to keep more than 11 million pounds of plastic bottles out of U.S. landfills annually.

The company also is planning line extensions in mattress pads and comforters, concentrating on eco-friendly fabrics, packaging and recycled fiber.

Meanwhile, Hollander's recycling programs are shifting into high gear; its manufacturing plants have expanded their programs to include corrugate, bale wrappings, plastic strapping, soda bottles, cans and paper. The material used to package

and ship bales of fiber to the company is now being recycled at all of Hollander's facilities, which totals more than 250,000 pounds annually.

The company has received much help in developing an economically and logistically sound recycling program from Cougles Recycling Inc., a full-service recycling center. Cougles accepts all types of recyclable materials (paper, corrugated, plastics, glass, and non-ferrous metals), which it then sorts and ships to appropriate mills to be processed and returned to a finished product.

Additionally, through new, sustainable packaging techniques, Hollander is reducing its footprint by eliminating 4.2 million square feet of corrugate, and 2.3 million cubic feet of shipping space, resulting in more than 400 fewer truckloads used for product shipments.

Relatedly, the company has been partnering with major retail customers to find new solutions to reduce cube size and carton-to-product ratios.

With respect to transportation, 68 percent of Hollander's inbound freight is now being moved by U.S. EPA-certified Smart-Way partners.

Looking to future innovations, Hollander continues to perform analyses of its



As part of its goal to achieve zero waste by the year 2010, last year Hollander launched a new line of pillows made from recycled plastic bottles. The pillows have been a hit at Wal-Mart and other retailers.



processes to determine additional ways to eliminate and reduce waste. While the market for recyclables has shrunk significantly in line with the economic slowdown, Hollander remains confident that it will achieve its zero-waste goal, as it works with suppliers to ensure that any materials used in the shipment of its goods are absolutely necessary and also are recyclable. ◀



Aventura Clothing

HEADQUARTERS: Sparks, NV | www.aventuraclothing.com

NOMINATED BY: Sportif USA (Parent Company) | www.sportif.com

Aventura Clothing, focused on the emerging age-30+ female consumer seeking a "Lifetime of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS)," is an eco-friendly brand that reflects the resilience and entrepreneurial spirit of its founding company, Sportif, which began in southern California in 1965, with founder John Kirsch selling tennis shorts designed for quality and comfort from the back of the family station wagon.

The company eventually transitioned into outdoor clothing (hiking, fishing and nautical apparel) and the family business relocated to the Sierra Nevada a few years later. Sportif was a pioneer in integrating stretch fabric within outdoor and boating apparel, with innovations including its

TOP INNOVATORS

“Original 7-Pocket Stretch Shorts.” It also utilized Gore-Tex and sun-protective fabrics as a private-label contractor of men’s apparel for companies including Eddie Bauer and L.L. Bean.

The company has persevered through setbacks and tragedies, including Kirsch’s death when his twin-engine plane crashed in the snow-covered San Bernardino mountains. At that point, son John Jr. assumed the helm and successfully guided the company.

Sportif’s men’s wholesale brand sales peaked in 1999, subsequently suffering the effects of global competition and consolidating channels, and the company found itself at a crossroads in 2004.

At that time, the company chose to buck conventional wisdom by launching a new brand even in the face of many challenges, and established Aventura in 2006. “Four years of dynamic growth” later, Aventura recently launched its spring 2009 line, which features more than 80 percent sustainable textiles, comprising more than 100 styles.

The company has dived headfirst into its eco-friendly calling. Sportif’s seed of inspiration was planted in 2002 when it became

a founding member of the Organic Exchange, the organization devoted to promoting organic cotton usage. Aventura debuted organic cotton with its first line and, since then, has woven hemp, bamboo, soy and recycled polyesters into the mix. The women’s lifestyle brand has realized particular success with specialty outdoor wear retailers and boutiques.

Sportif claims several unique in-house green initiatives that support the Aventura mission. The company, for instance, is an unrelenting recycler of IT equipment and it has also invested thousands of dollars in an earth-friendly exchange cooling system for its offices. To air-condition its 30,000-square-foot distribution center, the company implemented an electronic-louvered system that exchanges superheated inside air with cooler air from the outside. The solution results in massive energy consumption reduction that is several times greater than conventional air conditioners.

Aventura embraces a green mission statement and slogan: “Helping the earth ...one garment at a time.” In conjunction with its parent company’s staying power and persistence, the approach has proven to be a winning strategy. ◀

The Children’s Place

HEADQUARTERS: Secaucus, NJ | www.childrensplace.com

NOMINATED BY: Lectra | www.lectra.org

In July 2008, The Children’s Place set out to provide its designers with the most advanced digital design development and management capabilities on the market for both textile and fashion design. The popular specialty retailer of children’s merchandise completed a successful migration from Lectra’s U4ia design technology solution to Kaledo, Lectra’s new design suite.

“We knew that Kaledo was the ‘latest and greatest’ in design technology, but the trick for us was to incorporate the new tool into our design team of 60 users while still getting our collections out on time,” said Phil Wozny, senior director of merchandising systems at The Children’s Place. “Together with Lectra’s team, we were able to implement a rapid migration strategy to effectively cope with the double challenge of learning a new tool and overcoming issues related to change management.”

A decision was made to require all users to move to Kaledo without the option of returning to U4ia. “It worked very well, with only seven days of training for each user and not a single delivery delay,” says Wozny. “We’ve been very pleased.”

To achieve maximum user compliance and productivity, Wozny and Leslie Farber, senior director of art at The Children’s Place, implemented a switchover strategy — despite initial protests from their teams. Kaledo training sessions were held for groups of 10 people with a variety of skill sets and job functions, covering Kaledo Print, Knit, Weave, and Collection, with the entire group trained in just five weeks. The designers then worked entirely on Kaledo for the new collection. “When they got back after training, they found that U4ia wasn’t on their desktops anymore,” Wozny said.

A feedback program was set up to ease the migration and optimize productivity. “Super-users” were named from each design team who met once a month to share shortcuts and tips to resolve various issues. Feedback from those meetings was shared with management at The Children’s Place and with Lectra teams to maximize communication and efficiency. “We instituted a very positive and open feedback exchange system with Lectra which helped make our migration particularly produc-



The Children’s Place migrated its design team of 60 users from Lectra’s U4ia design technology to Kaledo, its new design suite, and still managed to get its collections out on time.

“tive,” Farber says. “It has really worked out quite well.”

Kaledo offers “newer and much richer functionality,” says Wozny. “I knew the technology would be a big ‘win’ for The Children’s Place if it was embraced by our design team and if it helped to streamline and accelerate our design and development processes. So far, that’s exactly what Kaledo is doing.” ◀