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TECH FOCUS

Making the
Switch to PLM



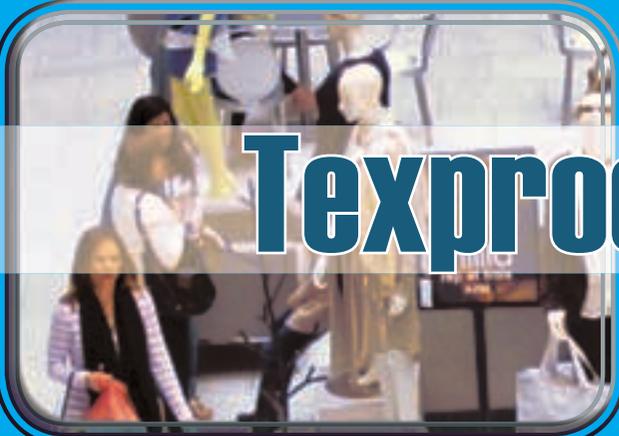
SOURCING

Colombia FTA
Goes Into Effect

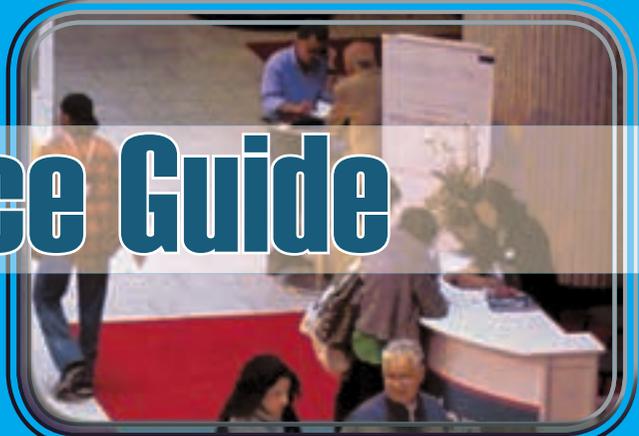


MADE IN AMERICA

Domestically Made and
Sold Online—American Giant
& American Love Affair



Texprocess Resource Guide



Colombia Free-Trade Agreement Goes Into Effect Next Month

After years of negotiations and months of ironing out the fine details, the United States-Colombia Free Trade Agreement will go into effect May 15.

That is good news for apparel and textile makers, whose goods will see tariffs eliminated on items made from regional yarns. Knit fabric follows a fiber-forward rule.

Many U.S. companies export yarns and textiles to Colombia, where they are converted into clothing and often sent back to the United States.

In 2011, U.S. apparel and textile exports to Colombia totaled \$165 million, with most of that being textiles and yarns. The United States in 2011 imported \$263.5 million in textiles and apparel from Colombia, with the bulk of that being apparel.

Implementation of the free-trade agreement was announced April 15, when President Barack Obama was in Cartagena, Colombia, for a three-day Summit of the Americas meeting.

One of the sticking points to getting the new free-trade agreement up and running were changes Colombia needed to make to assure that their labor leaders and union organizers received better treatment. Several labor leaders have been killed for their organizing efforts.

U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk said, "Colombia has successfully implemented the key elements of the Action Plan Related to Labor Rights, which the Obama administration negotiated to gain domestic support."

Some of those elements include the Colombian government passing legislation to create a Ministry of Labor. It also approved legislation criminalizing interference in the exercise of labor rights and launched the doubling of its labor inspectors.

The Obama administration expects the new free-trade agreement will expand U.S. exports by \$1.1 billion a year and increase the U.S. gross domestic product by \$2.5 billion.

In 2011, the United States exported \$14.3 billion in goods to the South American country. Colombia is a large importer of U.S. grain, and it exports a fair amount of tropical fruits to the United States.

Implementation of the U.S.-Colombia free-trade agreement comes shortly after the launch of the U.S.-South Korea Free Trade Agreement on March 15. The U.S.-Panama Free Trade Agreement, which was passed by Congress last year along with the trade pacts with Colombia and South Korea, is still awaiting implementation.

—Deborah Belgium

Textile & Apparel Trade 2011

(in millions)

Colombian Exports to U.S. \$263.5

U.S. Exports to Colombia \$165

Retail Profile

Colombian Swim and Lingerie Reign at Lencería Boutique

Juliana Correa's underwear and swimsuit drawer is almost purely full of brands designed and made in Latin America.

Growing up in Miami, Correa saved her bikini and lingerie shopping for the annual summertime family vacations to her parents' native Colombia. In adulthood, she converted her stateside friends to her favorite Colombian brands, as well.

"All my friends always bring back two to three bathing suits [from Colombia]. Everyone who has tried stuff on has fallen in love," Correa said.

Her new boutique, **Lencería** in West Hollywood, Calif., is an expanded closet of her very favorite swim and lingerie brands that are designed and manufactured in Colombia: **Amulette**, **Maaji**, **Agua Bendita**, **Touché** and **Saha**. The shop also stocks swim from brands that have similar Latin American heritage and/or flavor, such as **Vix**; **So De Mel** by Brazilian/Italian designer Sonia De Mello; and **Adriana Degreas** and **Clube Bosse**, both from Brazil.

Correa explains a charming history behind each brand in the store. Agua Bendita was founded by two friends who met in fashion school, and its swimwear is known for hand-embroidery and embellishment applied by women in Colombia. Touché is "a very classic Colombian brand that most Latin Americans know and love. It's not too much going on but does a great job at fit." New York-based **Knots and Stones** jewelry, made by Colombian designer Andrea Rodriguez-Tarazi, uses seeds harvested from South America.

"I wanted to do brands I would be proud of—fun, interesting, different," Correa said of the designer pedigree. She added that Co-



CULTURE CLUB: Juliana Correa saw an opportunity in the market for her favorite Colombian swim and lingerie brands to flourish. Her Lencería boutique in West Hollywood, Calif., highlights colorful Latin American style.

lombia has a rich history of textiles and garment manufacturing.

"Argentina is more fashion-forward when it comes to streetwear," Correa said. "[Swimwear and lingerie is] what Colombia does really well."

Kelly Ellingson—vice president of sales and marketing in North America for Colom-

bia-based brands **Maaji**, **Amulette** and **Agatha Ruiz De La Prada**—said that expensive duties have deterred retailers from buying Colombian brands in the past. Since the passage of the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement, which allows for free trade between the two countries, Ellingson

anticipates more Colombian brands will enter the American market.

Ellingson said retailers have embraced the Colombian brands' styling, which has a "flirty playfulness that's sweet and sexy at the same time." She continued: "There are some amazing companies here in the states, offering great service and great products. However, working with Maaji really reminds me of years ago. There is such a gracious professionalism that begins with the owners, sisters Amalia and Manuela Sierra, which trickles throughout the entire company. Everyone in the company is an important part of something really special, and they extend that same attitude onto our customers."

Colombian designer Johanna Isaac of **Amulette** lingerie said it was only recently that Colombia began designing and exporting swimwear and lingerie for the high-end market. Isaac said high-end Colombian designers who made it big in America—specifically, Silvia Tcherassi, who has a women's clothing atelier in Florida, and Nancy Gonzalez, whose clutches are sold at **Bergdorf Goodman**—have paved the way for more upstarts to be accepted.

"Six years ago, Colombia was recognized for support, basics and classic brands, always with high quality—but did not offer exclusive and premium designs. Our country has the most qualified handcraftsmanship and incredible creative talent. Now brands like **OndadeMar**, **Agua Bendita**, **Maaji** and **Amulette** are being recognized," Isaac said.

—Rhea Cortado

"Six years ago, Colombia was recognized for support, basics and classic brands, always with high quality—but did not offer exclusive and premium designs. Our country has the most qualified handcraftsmanship and incredible creative talent."

— COLOMBIAN DESIGNER JOHANNA ISAAC



HOME/WORK: The swim and lingerie boutique started on paper as a business-school project. As she made the dream a reality, Correa used the brand identity of "elegance, romance, joy" to create the mood and atmosphere of the store.

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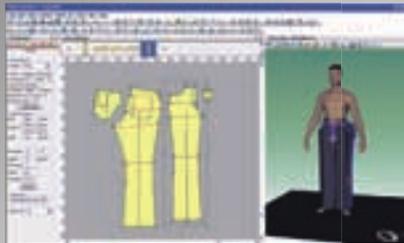


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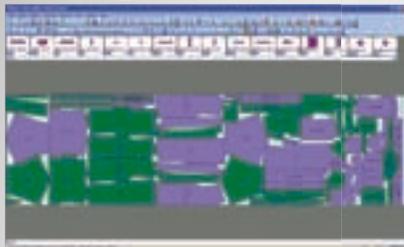
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When to Make the Switch to PLM?

Product lifecycle management software providers offer companies a roadmap to PLM.

By Deidre Crawford Technology Editor

With the increase of fast fashion, apparel companies are under increasing pressure to provide more lines, more quickly, which can mean chaos for a company that isn't prepared to deal with the increased workflow.

"Retailers are requiring wider assortments, and instead of three items, now they want 23 items and a bunch of styles, a bunch of colors and many size ranges," said Mark Burstein, president of sales, marketing, and research and development for **NGC Software**. "They're looking to the brand to offer them a lot of options that they can select from, and they want them to show these items more often than they used to. In the past, there were two seasons: Spring and Fall. Now they expect a lot of different lines and faster—from the time [a brand] shows them a line to the time the goods are delivered has shrunk."

Speed to market has become a challenge for many apparel companies. Spanish retailer **Zara**—which is reportedly able to turn goods from concept to shelf in two to three weeks—helped initiate the speed-to-market push starting about five or six years ago, Burstein said.

"What happens is that these companies are finding it impossible to keep up with this pace regardless of the amount of man hours being worked," Burstein said. "As a result, companies that cannot keep up the pace will lose their customers to other competitors, and their staff will burn out."

Tools such as spreadsheets, **Adobe Illustrator**, **SharePoint**, product data-management tech packs and email can work well for companies handling smaller work orders, but often mid- to large-sized apparel companies need a more sophisticated and unified system to keep their workflow organized.

Missing information

If a company finds that information is falling through the cracks, that is one of the signs that the company is ready to graduate to PLM, Burstein said.

Errors, missed deadlines, and losing communication between designers, manufacturers and production people means the

company's current system isn't working, he explained. For example, when an order is revised and it's never communicated to the factory, so the goods are made incorrectly.

"The other thing that they notice is that their calendars [for events, production and fit approval] are consistently running late because they find out about a problem at the last minute rather than proactively trying to be ahead of problems," he said.

Delays—from the inability to answer questions to not having any idea how much time is going into the creation of product, not having certainty on product adoption rates and a complete lack of control over the data—also signify that it's time to upgrade, said Robert McKee, fashion-industry strategy director for **Lawson**.

"When it takes longer to answer a question about what's going on in the product's lifecycle than the product is going to have in its lifecycle, it's time to change," McKee said.

Struggling with record keeping can also serve as an indicator that the company is ready for a change.

"There's a boatload of compliance requirements—not just international but also state and local," he said. "What about the issues of sustainability? Do you have your record keeping all filed in a way that you can justify your decisions if you're asked to?"

Trouble staying on top of workflow

If the staff feels that they are constantly running behind schedule no matter how many hours they work, that's a sure sign they're ready for an upgrade to PLM, Burstein said.

"From an owner's perspective, they can see the company isn't performing the way it needs to or the way they expect it to, and from the staff's perspective, they're constantly working and they can't accomplish their goals in a timely manner," he explained.

Robbie Pannell, products applications support specialist at golf-apparel retailer **Cutter & Buck**, listed some of the ways

▶ PLM page 6



SPEED TO MARKET: Apparel companies are under increasing pressure to produce more goods in a shorter time frame. PLM can provide a more unified system that helps prevent information and communication from becoming lost in the process.

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PLM *Continued from page 4*

staff may be bogged down:

•“Designers and tech designers are spending hours of their day creating and updating tracking charts for management.

•“Management has to ask for the status of everything instead of looking in a central mainframe or running reports themselves.

•“Designers have to request lab-dip and testing status of materials for their styles instead of looking in a central place.

•“Tech designers are sending countless emails each day with fit comments; spreadsheets are continuously getting out of date.”

Communication and collaboration is very important both within a company and with its suppliers, and when it’s not happening quickly enough or accurately enough, a company quickly falls behind, said Lenny Weiss, North America sales manager for **Yunique PLM**.

“A company realizes at one point that they’re not getting their info quick enough to management or suppliers and it takes too long, and when that happens, problems multiply,” he said. “Once you’re behind and trying to make that up, it’s more difficult. ... Speed to market is so important. You can’t compete without getting to market quickly, properly and accurately.”

Size matters

PLM becomes a useful tool for an organization that has at least three designers and is doing business with at least 10 vendors, Burstein said.

“Once it reaches this size it becomes very difficult to manage product lifecycle management using email and spreadsheets, and they need to be on a system,” he said.

When a company is large enough that it exhibits an inability to manage its development, sourcing, compliance, or sustainability cycles and requirements, it’s time to upgrade, McKee said.

“But if you can’t find a difference between your current PDM approach and a new PLM system, don’t buy it. It’s insufficient to your needs,” he said.

Shrinking profit margins

When executives start noticing that they used to make a 30 percent profit margin on a particular style, but their profit is dropping due to unanticipated costs during the production cycle and now they’re only making 15 percent profit, that could be a sign that it is time to implement a PLM system, Burstein said.

Having the wrong system can result in problems such as paying for air freight because factory goods are running late, which can quickly eat into a company’s profit, he explained.

When a company is ready to grow

Another sign that a company is ready for PLM is when they are thinking of growing, Weiss said.

“When a company wants to grow, if you don’t have the right systems in place, you stymie your growth rate, so you can’t grow fast enough,” he said. “But if you have the right systems in place, the system [rather than the staff] is bearing the brunt. We never talk to a customer about reducing people. We tell them that as they grow, they won’t have to add people.”

Brian Snyder, director of global apparel operations at **Wolverine World Wide**, which recently adopted Yunique’s PLM,

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ONE-STOP SHOP: Golf apparel retailer Cutter & Buck switched to Yunique PLM to streamline its product-development lifecycle and provide a “one-stop shop” for the company’s product data.

said that legacy data can also play into the decision.

“You have to look at the size of your business and the amount of legacy data [previous seasons of development] that you maintain. In our case, we only had three or four years’ worth of data, and there was a lot of it that we felt was obsolete, so it wasn’t a huge challenge for us. But for some companies it will be.”

The benefits of PLM

Some of the benefits of PLM include saving time through the “enter once, use many” data approach, McKee said.

Snyder agreed.

“I would say that the most immediate improvement was multiple points of data entry became a single point of data entry,” he said. “When we want to create a line plan, there is basically one source that we go to to generate all of that data, and that’s the same source that we communicate to our sourcing partners. It’s not a separate spreadsheet; everything comes from one data source—one version of the truth—which prevents errors

and miscommunications.”

Other benefits include the time saved from physical faxing, emailing and air freighting, McKee added.

“If we look at the traditional concept, development, production and delivery cycle of a product in the old sewn-products industry, we’d be looking at an anticipated cycle of 18 months. Today, with the deployment of systems like PLM and ERP [enterprise resource planning]—we’re seeing those old cycle times cut to

times more like 18 weeks,” he said.

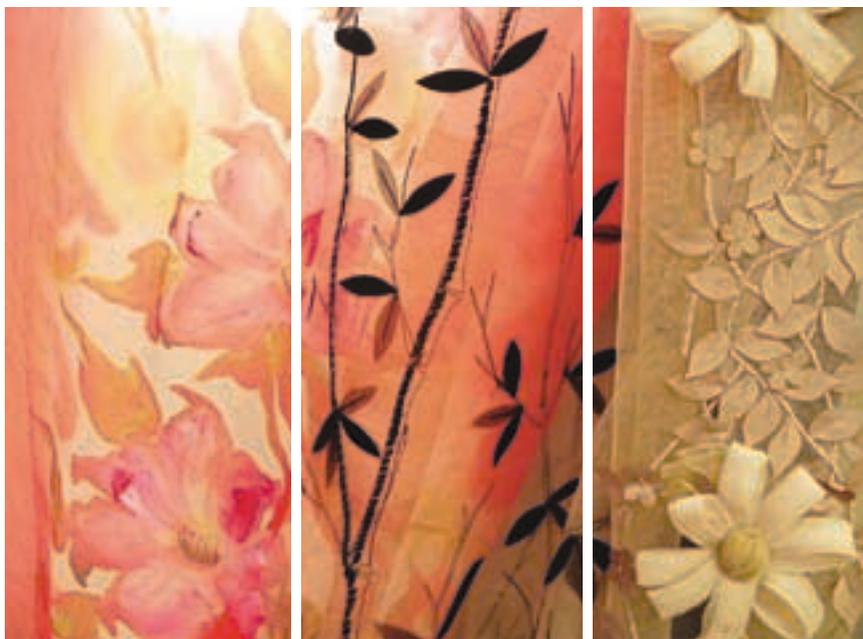
Cutter & Buck is also using Yunique’s PLM system, which Pannell says has provided a “one-stop shop” for all of his company’s product data to live.

“Product line directors are able to see what is going on with their styles at all times—whether it’s down at the lab-dip level or at the production sample level. It has streamlined communication with our overseas partners by allowing us to share tech packs through the system, which has reduced the amount of email we’ve had to send,” he said. “It has helped a great deal with change management. Being able to look back at previous versions of CADs is very helpful, as is seeing all of a style’s sample comments in one central repository.”

The PLM system can create instant, current tracking reports and filter them depending on the user. Employees can log in from anywhere in the world to check on the status of styles and update comments.

Pannell described the “visibility” provided by the system as “invaluable and awesome.” ●

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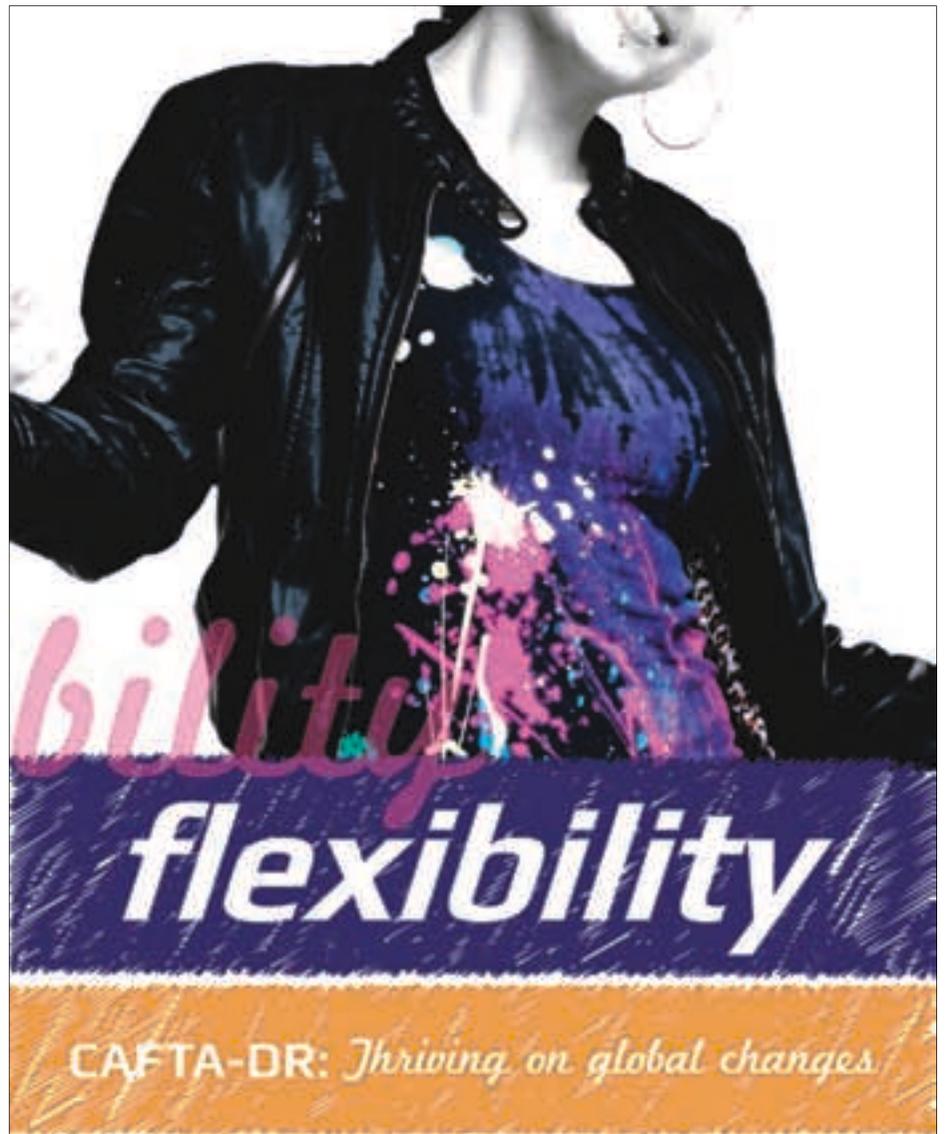


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American Giant: Made in San Francisco, Sold Online

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Debut a fashion line at a trade show, wholesale the new brand to retailers, and down the line, open a branded boutique and an e-commerce store devoted to the label. That's the conventional model of starting a fashion label. San Francisco-headquartered **American Giant** is part of an emerging avenue of manufacturers and retailers looking to turn that model upside down. Company founder Bayard Winthrop is hoping to lead this new wave. He sells his high-quality men's basics exclusively at the brand's website (www.american-giant.com) and manufactures them close to the company's hometown.

Winthrop estimated that he saves more than 70 percent of his manufacturing budget by cutting out retailers and other wholesale partners. This pure-play vertical retail model creates more revenue to manufacture what he believes to be the best hooded sweaters and sweatshirts his label could make. On April 17, American Giant debuted a T-shirt line.

"A shirt you buy from a department store costs \$70, but it only took \$10 to make," Winthrop said. By eliminating all those markups and margins, he contends that he's able to invest much more in the product itself. "My career has been about how to cut [manufacturing costs] down from \$10 to \$8 to \$7," said Winthrop, who helmed action-sports brands **Chrome** and **Atlas Snowshoe**. "For the first time, we can look at the distribution piece and unlock real savings to



GIANT STEP: Entrepreneur Bayard Winthrop started American Giant, a San Francisco-based menswear basics label that sells exclusively online.

reinvest in the product for the consumer." Other companies staking their future to pure-play vertical retail include eyewear manufacturer and e-commerce retailer **Warby Parker**, which raised \$12 million in venture capital last September. Pants line **Bonobos** got its start selling its high-end menswear online exclusively since 2007, but on April 12, **Nordstrom Inc.** announced that it led a \$16.4 million round of investment for Bonobos. Bonobos will now be sold at 20 Nordstrom locations.

Another San Francisco-based men's pants line, **Cordarounds**, launched with a similar e-commerce-only model, which it recently expanded when the company rebranded as **Betabrand**, an online-only

company that "designs, manufactures and re-releases new inventions every week. Back in 1999 **Lucy** launched as an online-only resource for women's activewear. In 2007, the company was acquired by **VF Corp.**, which rolled out a fleet of 60 physical stores for Lucy.

Still, the online-only model is very new for the apparel industry, and most apparel businesses prefer the traditional model of wholesaling,

said Allen Doan, president of the **Orisue** menswear brand, based in Santa Ana, Calif.

"People are beginning to experiment with domestic manufacturing," Doan said. "When you're already established, it's hard to transi-

tion to a full collection where everything is done domestically, especially when customers are expecting a certain price point."

Doan forecast more labels would experiment by manufacturing capsule collections domestically and selling them online, but he added that American Giant might scare off penny-pinching customers. Doan is friendly with members of the American Giant board of directors.

"Americans like the idea," he said, referring to a vertical e-retailer making high-quality clothes. "But they may not necessarily want to pay the price."

An American Giant hooded sweatshirt retails for \$69, and a sweatshirt retails for \$59. In comparison, **American Apparel** fashion

designer and engineer who worked on the **iPod** while an employee at **Apple Inc.** Winthrop hired a novice fashion designer because he wanted someone who could bring new perspectives to basic silhouettes

"[Manoux] has a very specific point of view of building a garment from the ground up," Winthrop said. "He has a deconstructionist point of view, which is measured against people who have a solid apparel experience. It has been an odd but happy marriage."

Winthrop said the savings realized by the vertical retail model can be channeled back into the quality and construction. "The managers at SFO often say, 'You don't need a yoke on this panel; it will save you 20 cents,'" he said. "We always say, 'We want to keep the yoke and the triple-needle stitch.'"

"We believe we're building such incredible momentum because we're new and independent and we're committed to American-made quality."—AMERICAN GIANT FOUNDER BAYARD WINTHROP

Winthrop may be an evangelist for the pure-play vertical retail model, but manufacturing consultant Steven Goldman does not forecast small manufacturers will be lining

up to follow American Giant's lead. Goldman contends traditional manufacturing models still pencil out well. "Small manufacturer and wholesale apparel companies with annual sales of \$1 million to \$2 million get a much better return on their dollar invested by selling wholesale," Goldman said. "Their cost of sales per unit is far lower than selling consumer direct, and, thus, they reach more retailers." Goldman is the president of **Apparel Industry Consulting Service**, based in Los Angeles.

But business and consumer tastes are changing quickly, Winthrop said, and those not relying on e-commerce will be left behind.

"The current industry is stuck in layers

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SEEN ONLINE: American Giant's basics are sold exclusively online.

basics are also U.S.-made and sold through the company's e-commerce site, its bricks-and-mortar stores and its wholesale division. American Apparel's retail prices range from \$41 to \$60 for fleece and sweatshirts.

American Giant raised seed capital in 2011. The round was raised by Donald M. Kendall, ex-chairman of **PepsiCo**.

American Giant is manufactured at **SFO Apparel**, based in Brisbane, Calif., just south of San Francisco, and it has been making women's fashions and outerwear since 1994. The clothes are designed by Philippe Manoux, an industrial

of distribution, which react too slowly to a changing world and are too expensive," he said. "I believe consumers are smarter. They know there's too much money wasted between the consumer and product, paying the middleman."

But the final word on American Giant will be its product, Winthrop said.

"We want to be judged on quality, construction and fit, first and last," he said. "We believe we're building such incredible momentum because we're new and independent and we're committed to American-made quality." ●

New L.A. Website Offers Only American-Made Apparel

By Deborah Belgum Senior Editor

For years, Noelle Nguyen took most of her production for private-label blue jeans to far-flung factories overseas, where prices were lower than in the United States.

But after dissolving her clothing company and completing her MBA, Nguyen's passion has turned to breathing life back into the "Made in USA" apparel concept.

To do that, she recently launched an e-commerce site dedicated exclusively to selling domestically crafted garments and accessories that she and her team have selected from scouring various sources in the heart of the downtown Los Angeles Fashion District, the Internet and trade shows.

"The goal is to find as many American-made brands and support them," she said. "I would like to be the **Amazon.com** for everything made in the USA."

Her website, **American Love Affair** (www.americanloveaffaironline.com), launched on



PHOTO SHOOT: Showcasing a "Made in America" look



FRONT AND CENTER: Live mannequins, in the front window of American Love Affair's offices, wear some of the apparel featured on the website.

March 29 after two years of development and five months of searching for products. She and her team of eight have wandered through the **California Market Center** in Los Angeles and other showroom buildings, hunting for the right blouse or pant or dress. They have scouted for U.S. labels at trade shows and contacted Los Angeles apparel makers discovered on the Internet. "It is literally boots on the ground," Nguyen said.

Once a source is found, a buyer contacts the apparel maker or sales representative. A test order is placed to see how the product performs. Nguyen buys much of her merchandise and uses a 3PL, a third-party logistics provider, to store her inventory and ship it off as soon as possible. Or she may ask manufacturers to set aside enough inventory to fulfill potential orders.

Items on the site range from a woman's deep V-neck T-shirt for \$32 to a maxi-dress for \$198. There are men's button-up shirts for

\$68, handbags for \$54 to \$490 and earrings for \$62.

The website features vendor spotlights to showcase "Made in USA" manufacturers, including **Fifteen-Twenty, Fluxus, Division E, Tees by Tina** and **Michael Lauren**.

Nguyen's website is in tune with the new call for more American-made products. Specialty-store owners have said many of their clients have grown more patriotic and are searching for "Made in

USA" clothing.

Nguyen has years of experience in the apparel industry. She studied at the **Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising** in Los Angeles. From 2004 to 2008, she and several partners ran an apparel company called **Moda**. They made private-label goods for stores such as **Macy's, Forever 21** and **Charlotte Russe**.

Nguyen, who recently completed work for an MBA at **Pepperdine University** in Malibu, Calif., spent 18 months studying the domestic and global apparel industry for an academic project. Shortly after presenting her project, she launched her self-funded website, whose offices are located near the Los Angeles Fashion District. She and eight workers have space on the ground floor of **The Blackstone Apartments** at Broadway and Ninth Street. Through the tall floor-to-ceiling windows, you can see people busy at their computers. Stacks of clothing are piled on a table. A small photo studio is set up to take pictures of mer-

chandise. A message in the window says "Buy American. Rebuild the dream."

Long journey

Nguyen's call to support American-made goods comes from someone who appreciates the United States. Nguyen was a Vietnamese refugee who, with her mother, fled that Southeast Asian country after the Vietnam War. They left in a 20-foot boat with 65 other refugees who were lost at sea for a week.

They met up with her father and older sister and brother in a Thai refugee camp where they lived for two years before being transferred to another refugee camp in the Philippines. Six months later, a U.S. church sponsored the family, and they moved to Baltimore.

Nguyen remembers they didn't live in the best neighborhood in town. When her family hand washed their laundry and hung it out to dry, they were astonished to find their clothing stolen when they weren't looking. Despite those shaky beginnings, Nguyen is a diehard supporter of the United States.

"I love this country," she said. "Nothing pains me more than to see this economy deteriorate. ... I don't think we should sit back and do nothing about it."

Stephen Goldfield, the business manager for **Tees by Tina**, said he met one of the website's buyers in February at the **MAGIC** trade show in Las Vegas. He appreciates a website that touts what his 2-year-old company is trying to do. "We know we can make our products less expensively outside the United States, but we have made the decision to make it here, and we support anyone who markets and supports 'Made in U.S.A.' goods," he said. ●

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