



6 APPAREL'S TOP INNOVATORS

Apparel Magazine salutes many of the key visionary firms shaping the industry in its 3rd annual special issue. Profiles of our winners highlight their ingenuity in overcoming challenges, their willingness to adapt to change and their flair for tapping into consumer desires in a highly competitive global marketplace.

REPORTING BY CHRISTIAN CHENSVOLD AND JUSTIN FENNER

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Saks Fifth Avenue

New York, NY | www.S5A.com

NOMINATED BY: eZCom | www.ezcomsoftware.com

Like many large retailers, Saks Fifth Avenue asks vendors to obtain GS1 UPC codes in order to participate with Saks's EDI initiative. Because of the high cost of assigning UPCs, the unwillingness of some vendors became a barrier of entry preventing Saks from achieving maximum EDI participation. In order to bring these vendors on board, Saks Fifth Avenue implemented a separate EDI initiative geared toward helping them overcome this obstacle.

In November 2008, Saks launched its Lead 4 Program, which is based on sharing internal UPCs that start with the number 4. This format is an acceptable GS1 practice that allows retailers to assign UPCs that are only used with their specific trading relationships.

Because of its cost effectiveness, ease and speed to get up and running (two days maximum), Saks has found strong support for the program. Many vendors will eventually transition to regular EDI once their businesses grow and they can justify the cost of obtaining UPCs. Fourteen months into the program, Saks has more than 200 Lead 4 vendors in the program.

"Saks has never turned a vendor away for lack of EDI," says Sarah Polworth, director, vendor relations & EDI, Saks Fifth Avenue. "But now we can offer Lead 4 EDI, an alternative that makes sense for many business models. Lead 4 is an all-inclusive application. It enables the vendors to easily receive purchase orders, order price tickets, make GS1-128 labels and transmit ASNs and invoices."

"And within Saks Fifth Avenue," Polworth continues, "the program has improved efficiencies, reduced operating costs and eliminated errors. An all-around win."

When Saks came up with the idea of the Lead 4 Program, it selected eZCom Software, a leading Software-as-a-Service B2B integration provider. eZCom understood what Saks was trying to accomplish, and quickly defined the parameters, standards and rules that were pivotal to rolling out the new initiative. The end result is an automated system from registration to production that eases the burden for smaller vendors, while helping Saks achieve full compliancy from each vendor as they manage their relationship with Saks going forward. ◀



Luxury retailer Saks Fifth Avenue recently launched its Lead 4 Program to enable more of its vendors to participate in its EDI initiative.



Saks' Vendor Relations/EDI team, from left to right, are Anthony Loria, Sarah Polworth, Rohan Fenton, Francesca Passalacqua, Joanie Komisarek, Stacey Mower and Aja Robinson.



Patagonia's fit specialist, Kena Gonzalez, relies on Optitex for patternmaking, grading and marking.

Patagonia

Headquarters: Ventura, CA | www.patagonia.com

NOMINATED BY: OptiTex | www.optitex.com

Patagonia, the Ventura, CA-based outdoor clothing and sporting goods company, has been a leader in sustainability in the fashion industry for decades longer than sustainability has been a buzzword. In its first catalog, released in 1974 when the company was still called Chouinard Equipment, founder Yvon Chouinard wrote, "No longer can we assume the Earth's resources are limitless." Fast forward 36 years to the company's commercial for American Express's Member's Project, in which Chouinard echoes his original sentiments, saying, "We're a part of nature. As we destroy nature, we destroy ourselves. It's a very selfish thing to want to protect nature."