

HOSIERY TECHNOLOGY CENTER.**NEWS**

HTC STRATEGIES

Plan Includes Opportunities With Textile Center

Goals and strategies for the Hosiery Technology Center over the next two years were adopted by the Advisory Board, challenging the center to lead the industry into an era of lean manufacturing, broader marketing tactics, and ongoing workforce training.

The plan also challenges the board and industry to promote the center's outreach to the industry and help secure funds for growth. The board plan includes a \$1.3 million budget by May 2007 of which 40 percent would come from earned income.

James Halvorsen, sales and marketing executive with Clayson Knitting Inc. in Star, described the plan as "very aggressive."

"It will take a lot of work to meet these goals, but we have to start," Halvorsen added.

SPEED-TO-MARKET

GOAL: The Hosiery Technology Center will implement a model supply chain for the industry that will enable mills to receive yarn within one week of order, including small orders for specialty products and prototypes.

A task force of manufacturers and suppliers will be recruited to develop action steps for this goal. If U.S. manufacturers can develop new products quickly and fulfill orders on a timely basis, this will enhance the competitive position with offshore producers, the board concluded.

A partnership with the Center for Applied Textiles Technology figures prominently in this undertaking, HTC Manager Dan St. Louis stresses. The center has the capabilities of spinning yarn in small lots for research and development programs.

The HTC staff also will be working with manufacturing personnel in a "hands on" environment to help mills adapt to the learn manufacturing culture.



OUTREACH TO RETAILERS

GOAL: The Hosiery Technology Center should expand retailer participation with the hosiery industry, measured by specific referrals to mills and a 30-percent increase in testing activity by May 2006.

The advisory board believes that quality and value will continue to give domestic manufacturers an edge in sales to retailers in the U.S. and abroad. The capacity of the HTC to help vendors develop new products for quality-conscious consumers can generate more interest from retailers, the board concludes. Special events at the HTC, including those that focus on market trends, will be added to the calendar.

Since its inception three years ago, the testing laboratories of the HTC continue to expand and today employs four full-time personnel, several part-time people, and generates \$300,000 for the center's outreach to the industry.

The testing facilities of the Center for Applied Textiles Technology can help the HTC expand its capabilities, according to St. Louis.

WORKFORCE TRAINING

GOAL: The Hosiery Technology Center will expand its focus on training of production personnel, especially addressing those seeking to upgrade their skills, and by January 2007 will have programs in place with 60 companies..

Moving into the culture of lean manufacturing and intense supply chain activity will require integration of technology and motivated personnel, the HTC Advisory Board predicts. Online training services should be included in this undertaking.

Currently, the HTC is responding to requests for in-plant training. Lean manufacturing workshops are directed to "train the trainer" methodologies.

Members of the HTC board are concerned that fewer motivated high school graduates are seeking employment in hosiery mills and have recommended that public relations programs be directed to high school guidance counselors. The future of the industry depends on motivated personnel who are willing to be re-trained several times during their careers, some board members said.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: The partnership with the N.C. Center for Applied Textile Technology will enable the HTC to develop five new marketable prototypes which will be produced and sold by U.S. companies within the next two years.

The HTC will be the conduit for the textiles center to serve the hosiery industry across North Carolina. Research and development programs will be at the forefront, using the textile center's capabilities of producing specialty yarns for prototypes of new hosiery products.

The HTC will work with the textile center to encourage fiber manufacturers to send their newest products to the labs of both centers for production of socks and sheers and related items, including bodywear.