

Contract Knitting: Model for the Future

The model for relationships between greige mills and their vertical customers is still alive. But like the overall industry, the model is changing.

Contract knitting has been a mainstay for the U.S. hosiery industry. The ideal model involves costs-sharing between greige producers and their customers. But central today to the success of the business relationship is fast turnaround, zero tolerance for anything less than top quality and lean manufacturing.

Dan St. Louis, manager of the Hosiery Technology Center of North Carolina, says that greige mills that respond quickly to samples and deliveries will be successful. "We can't operate with the model that existed two or three years ago," St. Louis continues.

Legwear Trends will feature greige mills and actively promote their role in the hosiery industry in forthcoming issues. The

45-year old hosiery publication will focus on the new opportunities for contract knitters, working closely with the Hosiery Technology Center.

Greige producers are entrepreneurs, most employing fewer than 30 people. But nationally, 86 percent of all new jobs are created by companies with fewer than 100 employees. As larger companies seek to reduce overhead costs, contract knitting and finishing are cost-effective options... if the contractors put forth efforts to keep prices low and standards for quality and deliveries high.

The hosiery industry is supported by outstanding greige mills. Outsourcing does not have to go beyond the borders of the United States.

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Featured in *Legwear Trends* in
May 2004

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