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THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS



## **TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY MEETS REAL BUSINESS NEEDS**

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During the prolonged downturn of the past few years, many technology projects once considered critical were shelved as budgets were tightened. In recent months, fueled by an overall increase in business confidence, we have seen a significant rise in the level of technology purchasing activity. For the first time in this century, sewn-products companies have entered the new year with real plans and supporting budgets for the technologies that are needed to address their critical business needs.

Even with this positive outlook, it is clear that technology spending will not return to "business as usual" in all areas. The sewn-products industry has changed dramatically in recent years, and the need for supporting technologies mirrors this change. Customer-focused technology suppliers have added or updated their product and service offerings to address critical industry trends that will drive much of the purchasing activity going forward. Here, I will highlight two such solutions.

### **Time to Market**

Being first to market has always presented a competitive opportunity in the fashion business. But only in recent years have companies begun to appreciate how technology can play a critical role in saving significant time and money in the product development and pre-production processes.

As the focus on time-to-market has sharpened, innovative technology suppliers have extended the capabilities of early Product Data Management (PDM) solutions both upstream and down. The business case for these new Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) solutions has become more compelling as technology providers add support for business processes beyond traditional engineering (CAD) into merchandising and sourcing.

### **Strategic Sourcing**

As outsourcing quickly became the "norm" in our industry, so did the challenges related to managing global supply chains. For the sewn-products industries, managing complex and growing numbers of supplier relationships is critical to success in today's market.

Some technology suppliers, led primarily by traditional ERP vendors, are now marketing a new breed of Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) solutions aimed at streamlining the sourcing processes. These solutions focus primarily on the "source-to-settle" process, which includes the selection of sourcing partners, sharing of information within supply chains, and the procurement (or transaction management) process. Leading companies are now beginning to experience the benefits of these solutions in form of improved supplier performance.

Of course, many other important technologies are positioned to address the various needs of the sewn-products industries. With a positive economic outlook and new technologies in play, Technology Solutions 2004 should prove to be the perfect place for solution providers and buyers to meet for a much needed update.