

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP REPORT: TAKING THE UNIFIED APPROACH TO ERP

Technology & Business Insight – From Concept to Consumer

Apparel™

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A man with a shaved head, wearing a black leather jacket over a black t-shirt and dark jeans, leans against the side of a black car. He is looking off to the side. The background shows a city street with buildings and other people.

TOP INNOVATORS

2013

John Varvatos goes all out – and all in – on the rock'n'roll experience.

How this apparel superstar and 39 others stand apart.

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BY JORDAN K. SPEER, JESSICA BINNS AND AMY ROACH PARTRIDGE
Cover photography courtesy of John Varvatos & Chrysler

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Included with this month's issue is **A UNIFIED APPROACH: THE NEXT WAVE OF ERP**, an Apparel Thought Leadership report presented by Simpapel.

A person wearing a green hoodie and a headlamp is climbing a dark, rocky cliff face. The scene is dimly lit, with the person's headlamp providing the primary light source. The background is a dark, textured rock wall.

Apparel's 2013 TOP INNOVATORS

Congratulations to Apparel's 40 Innovator Award winners, companies that got their creative spark on by looking at their business in new ways — taking a fresh approach to solving problems that were impeding growth, or developing new products for consumers that they didn't even realize they needed, but soon will.

Creativity guru Roger von Oech once said that "it's easy to come up with new ideas; the hard part is letting go of what worked for you two years ago, but will soon be out of date." Read on to learn more about the inspiring stories of apparel businesses that learned how to let go.

BY JORDAN K. SPEER, JESSICA BINNS AND AMY ROACH PARTRIDGE

Cool-jams

San Diego, CA | www.cool-jams.com

NOMINATED BY: Client

You might not think the peak of the recession was an auspicious time to start a specialty sleepwear business, but that's just what Cool-jams did, launching in 2007 — at a time when a lot more folks than usual may have been suffering from sleepless nights.

Since its launch, Cool-jams has doubled sales and profits every year, and at its current growth rate expects to surpass \$1 million in sales this year. The company serves a niche in the \$2.7 billion U.S. sleepwear market, primarily targeting baby boomers, both men and women, with a collection of quick-drying anti-bacterial travel pajamas as well as pajamas for people who become overheated at night due to a variety of causes including menopause, warm climates, chemotherapy, cancer, anxiety, certain medications, obesity, thyroid problems, pregnancy, nursing and basic problems with body-temperature regulation. Today, the company sells its products primarily online and via small retailers, but is in discussions with larger retailers and expects to expand into that channel soon, both in the United States and internationally.

Cool-jams partnered with a company called Garmatex to develop its proprietary fabric and the technology behind it. "Cool-jams fabric is a spe-

cially designed poly microfiber that has been engineered to feel like soft cotton but to have all the attributes associated with the fastest-drying material in the world," says Anita Mahaffey, CEO. The fabric also offers anti-odor and anti-bacterial control with the company's proprietary antimicrobial agent, Bact-Out®.

"The fabric also lasts six times longer than cotton, maintains color-sharpness with minimal fade and is a viable alternative to cotton in any application where the inferior attributes of cotton have been considered 'the standard,'" says Mahaffey.

Interestingly, Cool-jams fabric was developed initially for the Canadian armed forces after a request from the military for a fabric that would look and feel like cotton but would possess other characteristics including antibacterial properties, wicking ability, temperature regulation, quick-drying capability, antimicrobial longevity and effectiveness, anti-pilling, washability and wearability. The tech-

Eighty million baby boomers in the United States alone are helping to drive demand for Cool-jams quick-drying and cooling sleepwear collections, including travel pajamas, and sleep wear for people who suffer from night sweats.



TOP INNOVATORS



“Cool-jams fabric is a specially designed poly microfiber that has been engineered to feel like soft cotton but to have all the attributes associated with the fastest-drying material in the world,” says Anita Mahaffey, CEO.

nology is proprietary, and the secret is locked in a safe, says Mahaffey. “A decision was made not to patent the Cool-jams fabric to keep the secret safe.”

Mahaffey can tell you that Cool-jams fabric employs MST micro fiber technology, which uses very fine fibers made into long-strand fibers called filaments. Each filament is less than one decitex in measure, finer than a strand of human hair. Five to eight filaments, each filament having slightly different performance capabilities, are twisted together to form a fine thread. “Due to the unique blend of filaments, and their configuration within the thread, this creates a greater surface area for moisture to travel along the thread. These threads

are then knitted together in a specific pattern which increases the speed of moisture movement through the material,” she says.

Mahaffey attributes the company’s growing success both to its extensive product development activities, which have produced what she says is the “best-wicking product and most effective night-sweat pajama solution” — and its high-touch customer service, “a la Nordstrom,” which she says produces a lot of happy customers who, via word-of-mouth, “share the magic of Cool-jams.”

“We do not just sell pajamas, but rather a way for people to be more comfortable at night while sleeping. When you sleep

better, you perform and feel better,” she says. The baby boomer market in the United States alone is 80 million people, and Cool-jams has recently begun to expand worldwide, currently shipping product to 150 countries. It has also outsourced many business functions such as internet advertising, order fulfillment and web design so the company can focus on expanding wholesale and retail sales and expanding its collections of temperature-regulating bedding, quick-drying travel pajamas and Cool-jams loungewear.

With all that on tap, says Mahaffey, “we expect dramatic growth in the next two years.”

— Jordan K. Speer