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Cintas: Serving Starbucks and McDonalds with a Smile

What do NASCAR, Starbucks, McDonald's, W Hotels and Royal Caribbean all have in common?

Answer: You'll find the Cintas label on uniforms worn by employees of all of these companies, and on many, many more. Cintas Uniforms go to work with more than five million people every day.

The company, which designs, manufactures and implements corporate identity uniform programs, is the largest uniform supplier in North America. Keeping its approximately 800,000 clients happy starts with rigorous fabric and garment testing processes to ensure that its garments meet safety and quality standards, allowing client employees to focus on their jobs, and not their uniforms.

With its new laboratory data management system from Lyons Information Systems, Cintas has improved the speed and accuracy of these processes, eliminated errors, and allowed it to provide more relevant information to decision makers in areas such as merchandising and product development, ultimately leading to better product.

Bryan Colpo, Cintas' director of core product planning & textile services, recently shared with Apparel some of the specific changes and benefits delivered by the new system.

Apparel: Tell us a little bit about Cintas' fabric and garment testing processes and requirements.
Colpo: Cintas has a thorough raw materials and finished goods testing process that supports our new product development efforts and our ongoing quality assurance programs. Our raw material programs include standardized textile and component tests from organizations such as AATCC, ASTM and ISO. We also have specialized testing protocol that mimic the use and care conditions, found exclusively in our laundry and in our customers' work environments, to ensure maximum quality and durability through the life of the garments. These testing protocol have been developed and honed in both our company-owned and external certified testing facilities. Our performance requirements are set by historical data captured over decades of product development and manufacturing experience.

Apparel: What were some of the challenges of your old methods that led you to the new laboratory data management software, CLAB?
Colpo: Our system prior to Lyons Information Systems' CLAB was a combination of a manual forms process with Microsoft Office reporting tools to track and analyze data, make reports and track work in process. We still have enormous numbers of paper files that are being uploaded into the CLAB software. Fortunately, the system was built so that the 10+ year history of testing we've done to this point can be uploaded and made available for analysis.

Apparel: How has the new solution changed your testing processes?
Colpo: Our processes have changed the most in the requesting and reporting processes in our lab. Any request for testing can be entered into the CLAB system directly by the party needing the data. Customization in the requesting process is available as well because CLAB allows several standardized options for selecting individual test methods or whole testing batteries. This helps our lab to provide targeted research that proves more useful to the merchandising and product development decision makers in our company.
CLAB also provides dashboards to requestors, certified labs and managers to track test samples through the testing queue and procedures. Finally, reports are generated in HTML or PDF directly from raw data without the need for analysis in other programs such as Excel or Access. Once approved, CLAB will email reports back to the requestors and time stamp the process for metric tracking later.

Apparel: How has the solution enabled you to work better and more closely with internal and external parties?
Colpo: In addition to making our internal requesting and reporting procedures better, our external laboratory certification program has become easier to manage as CLAB allows certified lab managers to receive work assignments, track work and report data all through a centralized system. This helps us with visibility of tests assigned to external labs, tracking their turnaround times, and helps correlate inter-laboratory data.

Apparel: What other benefits have you noticed?
Colpo: With one transfer of data (from form to CLAB) and no more manual calculations, CLAB has dramatically reduced the opportunity for operator error in our laboratory reporting processes.

Apparel: How did you select the Lyons' system? How smooth was the implementation process?
Colpo: Lyons Information Systems (lyonsinfo.com) had done previous work for our company by building a quality assurance software package for us. Lyons' experience with our business model and the interfaces between departments, customers and suppliers proved extremely valuable, as much of the tracking and tables was leveraged from the original package.

WEB EVENTS

Achieve Profitable Growth with Merchandise-Driven PLM
July 16, 2009 | 11 a.m. ET
>>Mike Burkett, Research Analyst, **AMR Research**
>>Alexandria Rumble, Global Product Marketing Director, **TXT e-solutions**
Register Now

Hear a case study from a leading fashion retailer who recognized the potential of PLM as a strategic process to support the challenges of its extraordinary global expansion.

Improve Warehouse Productivity: Hear how One Company Did It in Under Two Weeks
July 30, 2009 | 2 p.m. ET
Panelists:
- Lee Griffith, Partner, **The Context Group**
- Devin McCarthy, Global IT Director, **Propper International**
- David Walsh, Product Manager, **Lawson Australia**
- Bob McKee, Industry Strategy Director, **Lawson**
Register Now

- Listen to an independent industry expert on how to improve warehouse productivity.
- Get an overview of the Lawson Mobility suite.
- Hear how Propper International implemented a new scanning solution in under two weeks.

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WHITE PAPERS

RFID for Apparel and Footwear: Store-Level Success Sets the Stage for Bigger Benefits
6/3/2009
In apparel and footwear retailing, item-level RFID technology is having its biggest impact at the store level. Real-world deployments are boosting inventory accuracy to levels near 100%, a dramatic improvement that sets the stage for other key benefits: higher in-stock levels, sales increases, reduced inventory carrying costs and significantly shorter cycle count times. **Download Now**

Lyons was a great firm to work with. The company's developers took an incredible amount of time and resources to research our business, our laboratory protocol and our interfaces with suppliers and customers within and external to our organization. There were some hiccups during the development process, but in the end we were provided with a world-class database system for our laboratories and continue to receive great service for improvements and patches. We're looking forward to version 2.0.

Jordan K. Speer is editor in chief of Apparel. She can be reached at jspeer@apparelmag.com.

fast facts

* **Headquarters:** Cincinnati, OH
* **2008 Sales:** $3.9 billion
* **Increase from 2007:** 6 percent
* **2008 Net Income:** $335 million
* **No. of facilities:** more than 400 in the U.S. and Canada, including 11 manufacturing plants and eight distribution centers that employ more than 31,000 people
* **Markets:** Cintas provides corporate identity uniform programs as well as entrance mats, restroom cleaning and supplies, promotional products, first aid and safety products, fire protection services and document management services for approximately 800,000 businesses.