

A little to the left, then to the right

Finetuning the supply chain is critical to business survival and some companies elect to use a combination of products for an optimum outcome. BY DARREN GREENWOOD



Trans-Tasman supplier Longbeach supplies own-branded clothes for retailers including the Millers Group in Australia and Glassons in New Zealand. The company needs a sophisticated range of technical tools to link the production process from the design stage all the way to the factories and local offices in China and back to the warehouses and retail outlets in Australia and New Zealand.

Ruth Fisher, Corporate Affairs Director of the Christchurch-based company, said that as the clothes are in-house brands, there is a quick turnaround because the retailers want the goods pretty quickly – sometimes in less than 30 days.

“We also have to proof garments and there’s a lot of ‘to and froing,’” she said.

The company uses the well-established software Movex from Lawson (formerly Intentia) for producing orders and handling financials and the Microsoft-based Just One Place software for the supply chain, which handles products right down to style, colour and size.

Such a combination, Fisher says, means that Longbeach can view down the supply chain where an order is, allowing her company to assess where there might be problems and to give customers an idea when a delivery is due.

In addition, increasingly customers leave ordering to the last minute, waiting to see what the autumn or winter weather is doing before deciding how many pullovers to order.

“For several of our customers we take weekly

orders and we also have a quick-response model with a turnaround of under 30 days if they make special payments for airfreight,” she continued.

This means that to ensure such rapid turnarounds, developing relationships with suppliers is increasingly essential, with her firm now having a Shanghai office to better know the capabilities of suppliers and to train them where necessary.

Country Road uses the Justwin software, from Sydney-based Just One Place, but coupled with an Oracle Retail System.

General Manager of IT, Kevin Binns, said the company can track raw material deliveries from its fabric mills in Italy as well as manage the design and product development processes at its Melbourne head office, which are then electronically ‘signed-off’ using Justwin.

“On the logistics side, we have been working hard to rebuild our vendor-to-supply chain processes. The initial phase of this work has involved moving some of our ‘pick and pack’ activities offshore so that operations could be moved closer-to-source in Hong Kong and China and then cross docked across Australia and New Zealand.

“Our overseas agents also use the Justwin system. This means we can easily share design and tracking information with them across the web. As part of the recent project to improve our supply chain process we constructed various electronic interfaces to international ‘GS1’ standards. This allows for open communications of electronic EDI documents between the Oracle Retail System and all of our trading partners,” he told *Apparel*. 