



DEVELOPING A GROWTH-ORIENTED SOFT GOODS SUPPLY CHAIN



THE BUSINESSES YOU CHOOSE TO PARTNER WITH MATTER.

There is a lot of pressure to create products that meet business goals and are a success with customers. With so many contributing factors, it's difficult to bring these products to life, no matter how big or small the projects are.

Deciding what businesses to partner with has a direct impact on how a company bringing a product to market is able to grow. Growth requires a business partner that can provide value-added services, backed by a dependable support team, to get products into the marketplace.

What are value-added services? They're services that have a direct impact on the value of the end product, and can include things like product design, process engineering, and more.

Working with a company using outdated machinery, inexperienced employees, poor communication, and poor processes creates more cost than savings. It's stressful and overwhelming when products show up outside of spec or don't show up at all. Poor partnerships result in materials wasted, money lost, stress endured, and products that aren't made or delivered on time.

That's why it's important to understand exactly what qualifications and signs to look for when communicating with a prospective manufacturer about a product in development.

One of the biggest and most important questions people overlook when vetting manufacturers is this: "does this manufacturer have the capacity to support the growth of my company?"

This one question creates an entire set of criteria to choose the right manufacturer for the job. We hope this resource provides a new perspective and understanding of how to analyze manufacturers and make the best decision.

TEXTILE EXPERTISE IS CRITICAL FOR A MANUFACTURER

It sounds obvious, but it's surprising how easy it is to overlook a manufacturer's working knowledge and understanding of textiles and their uses. Whether it's a waterproof seat for a new line of jet skis, a better material to use for a zero degree sleeping bag, or an aromatherapy-friendly pillow casing, the product to be as high quality as possible for any given budget.

That's why it's important to get an understanding of what the textile options are, and how well the prospective manufacturer understands the science behind the materials.

There are many textile options available: wovens, non-wovens, knits, felts, vinyl, specialty textiles, and more. A manufacturer, like a doctor or a scientist, should be able to assess the project goals and vet all available materials based on their knowledge about how textiles behave.

Working with a manufacturer that has the capacity to innovate better products, based on research and experience, is the kind of manufacturer that can be trusted to provide the best solution for a product.



PRO-TIP

Working with a textile expert means they should have the right technology and the right processes for working with different textile materials.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INVENTORY AND STORAGE SOLUTIONS

Many business owners and supply chain professionals experience hardships with their supply chains. Receiving an incorrect order (or not getting the order at all) and other poor supply chain management issues create setbacks that are easily avoidable with a better process and better management.

Is there enough space and time to manage inventory and products? Is the warehouse space appropriate for soft goods?

Some manufacturers offer inventory and storage solutions that help supply chain managers organize the chaos. Because of the unusual nature of soft goods, it's important

to have a partner that offers climate-controlled storage facilities for textiles, ensuring materials are being properly and safely stored.

Working with a manufacturer that offers inventory services is critical. A manufacturer that offers such storage solutions will assume responsibility for having the right amount of inventory to fill orders without logistics delays.

Finding a manufacturer that can effectively manage supply, inventory, and deliveries is an important step to ensuring steady and sustainable growth.

THE POWER OF PROTOTYPING

There are enough potential problems in soft goods manufacturing; your manufacturing partner shouldn't be one of them. When production is going on for a long time, many manufacturers may begin to go through the motions, getting complacent with the work, resulting in the quality of the products declining.

A quality partner will perform regular prototyping to critically analyze the success of the product and assess if there are opportunities for improvement. This is a proactive step to ensure product quality is being held to the highest standard.

Working with a manufacturer that does prototyping creates a partnership that is

forward-thinking and always anticipating problems before they occur. A prototyping manufacturer will have a plan for scaling production according to demand. This means they will carry out efficient and cost-effective production, with the labor force and skills to scale it.

Partnering with a manufacturer that's endlessly striving for quality control means engaging with a solutions provider, not just a company that fulfills orders.

Proactive quality control, carried out by an educated and qualified team, results in incredible products within budgetary parameters.

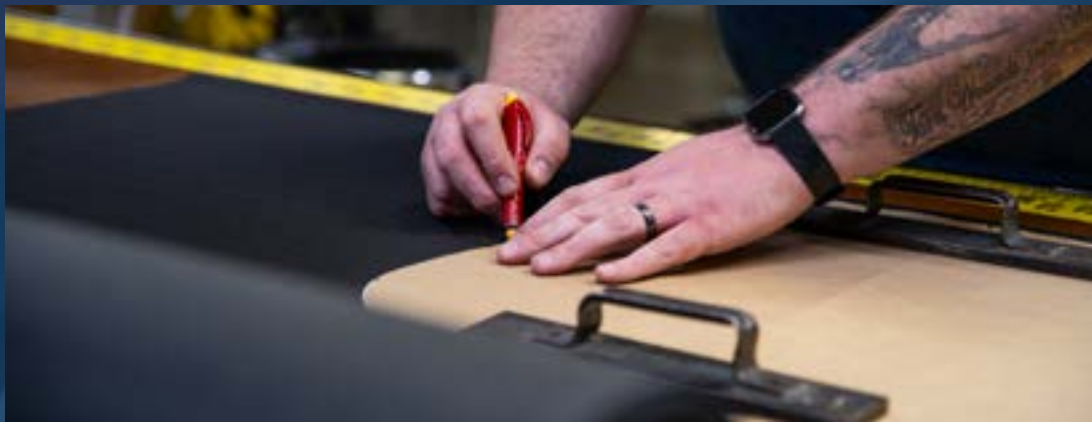
THE POWER OF PROTOTYPING

1. INQUIRE AND LISTEN

A manufacturer should review all the information provided and seek out clarification wherever needed. They should acquire additional information and confirm they have a complete understanding of the project vision. Next, it should be determined whether the production budget is feasible. If so, move forwards.

2. DESIGN AND DEVELOP

Confirm the manufacturer can produce the product in the timeline needed. With a tight budget, an efficient process is required to minimize downtime and maximize profits. Best standards dictate the need to produce a prototype for evaluation and approval. Once approved, the manufacturer can then confirm the procedure for development.



3. CONVERT AND DELIVER

First, a manufacturer should receive a purchase order. Then, they'll execute the production of order requirements. If they're a really good manufacturer, they'll regularly assess parts and perform process reviews to ensure that quality is being kept within standards at all times.

An example would be Fairway Products' Advanced Quality planning Process (APQP) that proactively ensures client products are expertly created and delivered.

4. CONSTANTLY EVOLVE

Working with a manufacturer that can support growth means they are a business constantly evolving and improving their processes to better serve customers. A manufacturer should evaluate alternate materials for performance and cost to ensure the best product for the price. Once the manufacturer creates a mock-up of the product, they should review the design again to make sure expectations are being met.

This helps ensure your manufacturing is proactively maintaining product quality and actively seeking out improvement opportunities.

5. PARTNER TOGETHER

A manufacturer that will support growth will be focused on establishing long-term rapport to build confidence and trust. They will determine a regular contact schedule to ensure communication is transparent and expectations are met or exceeded. Organization and communication are big factors in ensuring partnership with the right manufacturer. They should be concerned with meeting customer needs and providing the best product possible, every time.

Some companies believe these are the best practices, while others think that they should be completely enshrined in the process. At Fairway Products, this is called the Fairway Creative Process.

These specific standards have been developed by over a century of experience working in the soft goods industry, and experts have come to agree on their success and legitimacy.

Supply chain partners must be as committed to their customers' businesses as the customers themselves. Asking a prospective manufacturer what their process is like for cutting, sewing, and/or developing a product will provide insights into the thoroughness and unity of their work.

Gauging the cultural and physical environment of a prospective manufacturer will provide even more insights into the kind of work the company consistently produces.

HIGH-TECH PROGRAM (CNC) AND DIE-CUTTING OF TEXTILES

The more skills a manufacturer has, and the better equipped they are with advanced machinery, the better options there are for creating an incredible, cost-effective product.

Working with a manufacturer that uses a high-tech program (CNC) for cutting, alongside die-cutting textiles, means getting the most efficient use of materials with minimal waste. Examples of this would be multi-ply cutting, which results in impressive cost efficiency.

The equipment a manufacturer uses makes a big impact on the cost and quality of the end product. It's important to have an

understanding of the different sewing, cutting, and seam sealing technologies available to get the best services for a product. Using the right technology with the wrong material leads to spoilage of materials, cost overruns, and delays in delivery.

A great partner will know what type of machines are best for each specific job. For example, one project might require a highly accurate, high-tech program like a CNC cutter, while another requires a die-cutter due to the project's volume and dimensions.

WHAT IS CNC?



Does a product require thinner textiles like cotton or nylon? Is it a smaller order volume? Then CNC could be the best technology for the job.

A CNC (Computer Numerical Control) machine processes a piece of material to meet specifications by following a coded programmed instruction. A CNC sewing machine has an incredible ability to perfectly stitch even the most complex of designs and is the go-to method of sewing for products with zero design tolerance for irregular stitches.

CNC sewing machines are also well suited for small batch orders. Also, if the product uses a thicker material but has a low volume order, it could be best to use the CNC method depending on the complexity of the cut.

WHAT IS DIE-CUTTING?

Does the product in development require a thicker material? Is there a high order volume?

Die-cutting is cutting out intricate shapes using a sharp-edged die in a press (think of cookie cutters) commonly used on materials such as rubber, fiber, foil, leather, vinyl, cloth, paper, corrugated fibreboard, chipboard, paperboard, plastics, pressure-sensitive adhesive tapes, foam, and sheet metal.

Die-cutting is best for cutting thick materials. However, if there is a product that has a thinner material but requires a large volume, it may still be best to use the die-cutting method. Die-cutting is often more time-efficient per part than CNC cutting.

WHAT IS SEAM SEALING?

Seam sealing is the process used to create a waterproof seam on a textile. It also increases textile resilience and longevity.

Using heat and pressure, adhesive tape is applied to the textile. The heated tape and the

material are fed into two oppositely rotating rollers under pressure, called nip rollers. The end product is a coated material that is highly durable and secure, suitable for a wide range of applications.



YOUR PRODUCT IS ONLY AS GOOD AS YOUR MANUFACTURER.

A product can only be as good as the capabilities of the partners who produce it. Working with the right partner is key to ensuring growth with scalable production abilities.

For example, when **Seedsheets**, a company that produces non-woven material embedded with seed pods, came to Fairway Products, they were struggling to keep up with product demand and needed to find an effective and efficient way to cut their materials.

Using sophisticated, high-efficiency cutting (CNC) technology, Fairway can cut materials quickly and with acute precision, resulting in minimal waste within a budget that satisfies both parties (click [here](#) to read the full case study). This is why it's so important for manufacturers to be working with the best technology available, in order to have the right tools for the job.



[CLICK HERE](#)

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR
WORK WITH SEEDSHEETS**

DIFFERENT SEWING CAPABILITIES YOU SHOULD KNOW...

- Kevlar®
- Engineered Mesh or Scrim
- Leather
- Carpet
- Cotton Duck
- Wool
- Heavy-duty Webbing and Tapes
- Elastics
- Knits
- Wovens
- Canvas
- Furniture Fabrics
- Automotive and Transportation Fabrics
- Dymetrol®
- Flexible Laminates
- Vinyl
- Non-wovens
- Plastic Extrusions
- Die-cut Sheet Stock

Working with a textiles manufacturer that has experience with a wide variety of textiles, and has a deep understanding of how they can be used, is critical to making products that live up to the expectations of the final customer.

Working with a manufacturer that uses state-of-the-art technology means having confidence that the product will get made correctly, the first time. It means fewer mistakes, and less revenue wasted on unusable production.

Using advanced equipment creates more cutting and sewing options. Fairway Products' state-of-the-art equipment allows its experts to engineer, design, and develop products that bring customers' products to the marketplace with the best possible quality and price.

The best equipment, paired with an experienced and devoted staff, sets the stage for the best possible manufacturing partnership. It is critical to work with a business that has a team who truly cares, and has the experience to do the job right.

PRO-TIP

When reaching out to a manufacturer, gauge an understanding of what type of work they've done before, and what textile materials options are available.

LEARN MORE

At Fairway Products, we believe in the power of process and building partnerships focused on growth. The information we've covered is a great start to learning about how to choose the right manufacturer. We hope you learned something new that will guide you towards making the best partnership decision to take care of your product needs.

Want more information about choosing the right manufacturer, or a free consult on your project?

Contact the experts at Fairway Products and we'll make sure you have all the information you need.

GENERAL:
517-437-8940

SALES:
517-437-7304

