



Increasing Responsiveness to Customer Demand at National Textiles

National Textiles' business was moving to a more "at once" environment, but its legacy tools couldn't keep up with the demand. By implementing i2 solutions, National Textiles gained increased visibility into demand, enabling it to better respond to its customers' needs, while reducing obsolete inventory and waste.

Every industry faces the challenge to respond to increasing customer demands, and the textile manufacturing industry is no exception. Manufacturers are expected to respond to constantly changing demands and to fill customer orders in less time.

These industry demands, paired with lagging existing technology, challenged yarn spinner and textile manufacturer National Textiles.

"We realized that our business was moving away from a make-to-stock business to a make-to-order business, but our legacy tools just weren't keeping up with that demand," said Leanne Marshall, National Textiles' Supply Chain Capacity Planning Manager. "National Textiles was being asked to change styles much more frequently and could no longer carry enough inventory to buffer one season to the next. On top of that, the time our customers gave us to fulfill their orders was in a much more compressed window."

National Textiles relied on legacy tools that gave the company a forecast only once a month and prevented it from adapting to its customers' demand changes.



Challenges

- Fulfill customer orders with increasingly shorter lead times
- Carry adequate inventory to meet needs of retail-driven business
- Better respond to demand by gaining increased visibility into product detail

Solutions

- Replace inadequate legacy system
- Move from monthly to weekly forecasting and planning cycle
- Achieve unconstrained view of capacity needs

Results

- Increased responsiveness to customer demand
- Decreased obsolete inventory
- Reduced waste by removing slow moving and discontinued items from the system

Company Description

National Textiles is ranked as one of the Forbes 500 largest privately held companies. Headquartered in Winston-Salem, N.C., National Textiles has nine manufacturing locations in the southeast United States.

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— Leanne Marshall
Supply Chain Capacity Planning Manager
National Textiles



“With our legacy systems, we produced a forecast once a month that was just at a style, size, or shade level,” Marshall said. “By the time we knit the greige, we know that a T-shirt, for example, can only be a size large T-shirt, or it might only be one color once we’ve chosen the type of yarn. And with our old forecasting and demand planning systems, we just couldn’t recognize the demand changes and the level of detail that we needed it to.”

Why i2?

As part of its process to identify a supply chain solutions provider to help it better meet demand, National Textiles benchmarked several companies, including i2.

“i2 really was the only player in the market that had a solution that could tackle the number of SKUs we had, as well as the complexities of the soft goods industry,” Marshall said.

i2 solutions enable consumer goods companies to simultaneously optimize and monitor inventory; reduce costs and risks through integrated sourcing, negotiation, and procurement; and improve customer service levels and reduce fulfillment costs through multi-division and multi-channel order management.

“The visibility that Supply Chain Planner provides has made a big difference in catching slow moving items or items that are going to be discontinued,” Marshall said. “We’re able to clean up those items and remove them from the system before they have to be wasted.”

i2’s Contribution

National Textiles implemented i2 Supply Chain Planner™ for all of its capacity planning processes. The solution helps companies optimize production by responding to demand variability, profitably managing their supply, and satisfying their customers better than the competition.

National Textiles uses Supply Chain Planner to determine the capacity requirements to manufacture the 5 million pounds of finished fabric necessary to meet its customers’ demands each week.

“Our largest customers provide us with a good, refreshed demand once a week,” Marshall said. “Therefore, National Textiles runs a fresh model that gives us an unconstrained look at all of our capacity needs, whether it be which yarns we need to have ready to knit next week or which knitting machines need to be on the floor. We’re able to see what’s coming down the pipeline.”

National Textiles’ Results

i2 solutions have enabled National Textiles to achieve the level of visibility into demand that’s necessary to reduce waste and keep up with customers’ increased demands.

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Increased visibility also has enabled National Textiles to maximize production up-time.

“Textile plants are expensive to run, but they obviously need to run in order to generate a profit,” Marshall said. “Although we don’t carry a lot of inventory in our facilities, one of the biggest drivers for profitability is asset utilization. With i2 solutions, National Textiles has been able to reduce obsolete inventory, especially on the front end, where we store some yarn.”

The changes brought about by Supply Chain Planner have not gone unnoticed by National Textiles' customers.

"Our customers are finding that their demand swings much more wildly than it did before," Marshall said. "With our access to a weekly capacity outlook, we can be more responsive to their needs. The visibility into excess capacity provided by Supply Chain Planner also enables us to make more informed decisions about when and where excess capacity should come out and other capacity substituted into the system—without compromising customer service."



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