Apparel 2018 TOP INNOVATORS

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By implementing unified enterprise systems for greater inventory visibility, wrangling algorithms in service of gathering business intelligence and offering personalization, eliminating time and waste by using 3D in design and development, continually fine-tuning apparel style, fit and performance, and much more, this year's crop of Innovators are stepping up to the plate to address and fulfill consumer demand.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of Kenneth Cole and its brand mission to be the global standard for New York style and social consciousness, and it marks the one-year anniversary of a complete overhaul of its legacy IT systems.

Three years ago, the company realized it was time to make some changes to its tech systems. For years, it had been operating with manufacturing-based legacy solutions (geared more toward bills of material (BOM), for example), but what the company really needed was more modern and also fashion-based system (geared more toward sourcing and seasonality) that would fit the way we actually run our business," says Richard Kobylarz, vice president of IT.

After researching options, KCP chose RLM Apparel Software for PLM, ERP, financials and EDI, replacing a number of point solutions it had in place from different vendors. The new unified solution, which it implemented over a 10-month period ending in May 2017, has taken the company "out of green screens and into graphical screens," and transformed the business with increased capabilities and visibility.

Additionally, KCP implemented Qlik for business intelligence, which also ties back into the RLM system, and one of its next steps is to dig deeper into the new capabilities offered with Qlik to rebrand its reporting to a more graphical-based system, building easy-to-read dashboards for each department.

Altogether, its new systems have led to "cost savings in the millions," says Kobylarz, along with the ability to run its business "much more efficiently and effectively."