

SEAMS Member Spotlight: Hemingway Apparel

Note: Each edition of our newsletter, SEAMS features one of our esteemed members. In this edition of SEAMS Member Spotlight, Hemingway Apparel. Hemingway, S.C., is featured. Company President Chris Marsh responds to questions submitted by Devin Steele.

Year founded: 1978

Primary specialties: Cut-and-sew contractor of women's fashion underwear, camisoles, slips, T-shirts, performance tops, flat seaming – most knitted products.

Number of employees / location: 50 employees, one location in Hemingway, S.C.

Markets served: As a contractor Hemingway primarily serves other manufacturers, private labels and the federal government. The products are geared towards women's intimates, leisurewear, performance wear, blank tees for the printables industries, sustainable tops and sublimated performance tops incorporating UPF protection.

What are your company's differentiators? "Flexibility. Being founded in women's lingerie, we were and continue to be experienced with the most difficult fabrics to sew. From lightweight meshes, laces, micro-modal, elastane, lycras, tricots, cotton, polyester, fleece, poly duck canvas, wools, rayons, velvets, nylons, viscose, etc."

Please tell us something else that's special about the company. "Hemingway Apparel has been working diligently for a couple of years to develop an initiative with the South Carolina Commerce Department and K-12 educators called Industry in Education. It is a long-term effort to bridge the gap between local industry and schools. Starting in the third grade and focusing on the students who likely will not continue their education, but rather enter directly into the workforce. Grade levels are paired with a local industry on a project that will reinforce a current lesson being taught in school. Each year these students will have the opportunity to visit a different industry as they progress through each grade level and build their portfolio into their high school years."

How has your company adapted over the last 5 to 10 years to remain competitive? "The ability to offer a premium experience for the start-up to the Fortune 500 companies who wish to work with a cut-and-sew contractor. Standing behind what we do and delivering on our commitments."

What are your thoughts on the made-in-America movement and do you have a strategy in place, stated or otherwise, to produce or source in this country? "Hemingway Apparel has been actively involved in the made-in-America movement since pre-NAFTA. More recently, with the onshoring efforts over the last three or four years, we are strategizing on how to do more with less. We think efficiency is one of the key elements and can offset many of the workforce challenges."

What are the biggest challenges and opportunities in bringing manufacturing back to the USA? "The biggest challenge we have faced in the last 10 years has been the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). We have seen onshoring in certain products going back four years and have really needed to ramp up employment to meet the demand. However, the Employer Mandate hasn't allowed us to do that."

What is your business outlook for your company for the balance of the year?

“Hemingway is booked right now at capacity until February 2020.”

Please offer a comment on business conditions, your opinion on the health of the textile/sewn products industry markets you serve now and going forward and what things will make you successful in this environment?

“Our industry is very strong at the moment. It remains to be seen how the trade wars will affect us long term. It appears that the supply chain is expanding to meet the demands of U.S. production and the skilled labor force is being addressed in some unique ways. If we can effectively promote the cut and sew sector of the apparel industry the future is promising.”

How long have you been a member of SEAMS and please speak to the value it brings?

“We have been a member of SEAMS for 37 years. I think the common thread throughout is that the networking of SEAMS is invaluable to its members.”