



THE ASSOCIATION & VOICE OF THE US SEWN PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

### MILLENNIAL CORNER:

#### **Learning can be a two-way street between “old school” / “new school” in textile industry**

*Editor’s note: Here is our latest installment of our Millennial Corner feature. This blog gives the younger generation – who in the near future will serve in leadership positions and guide the direction of the association – a larger voice and platform NOW and will help them engage more the entire SEAMS’ membership while busting stereotypes.*

**By Rachel Evans Cranston**  
**Project & Academic Relationship Coordinator**  
**The Manufacturing Solutions Center**

Ok, technically I’m on the verge of Gen Z (solely in age). Even so, part of my generation has officially entered the workforce.

I grew up in Pennsylvania, not hearing much of the history of the rise and fall of the U.S. textile industry.

Fast forward to my sophomore year at N.C. State, where my love of math, problem solving and art drew me to the textile engineering program. Little did I know that it would lead me to The Manufacturing Solutions Center (MSC) after graduation, but it wasn’t that easy ...

The challenge I faced after graduation was finding a job that didn’t require more experience than the years I had even heard of textiles. Even after taking part in textiles internships during the summers, according to the industry, I hadn’t been exposed to the right areas and amounts of textiles to land a full-time position.

I didn’t know what I didn’t know.

My (now) husband Alex Cranston had met Dan St. Louis, the director of MSC, at our textile senior design presentations and had been invited to visit MSC and the TexProcess Americas trade show in Atlanta right after graduation. I took the day trip down to Georgia with him to gain some more industry exposure. I ended up meeting Dan, who asked what I was doing now that I graduated, and I simply replied that I was looking for a job. Dan asked me to come visit MSC for a tour and further our conversation. That next month, I became an MSC employee.

Dan saw the immediate need for a new generation to get involved in textiles. He took a chance on me and involved me in plant tours and industry conversations from the get-go. Before my internet was even hooked up in my new apartment, Dan brought me to more meetings than I could count.

As a newbie to the industry and a major introvert, this was daunting at first. After recognizing the community, collaboration and closeness within this group that I was stepping into, it started to make more sense. My involvement has helped me understand the dynamics of textiles in the U.S. and my understanding has led to a desire to learn and feel connected to its efforts. I feel as though this is true for much of my generation. We want to understand and be a part of the solution.



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In the past two years that I've been a part of MSC I've been asked multiple times, "How can we engage more people your age to get them interested in textiles, especially manufacturing?" I can't speak for every person out there, but I can draw on my own experience and observations:

- Show the younger generation that textiles is not like it used to be. Also, accept for yourself that textiles is not like it used to be – change is good. (Work conditions, machinery, sustainability, etc.)
- Prioritize work/life balance.
- Help the individual to recognize the purpose and value in each job in the supply chain.
- Bridge the gap between academia and industry, especially for someone who is willing to learn and shows good work ethic.

We learn so much technical knowledge in our four years of college, but barely have time to apply it or understand the network of companies and processes that exist. There are so many resources to acquire from the older generation in textiles, but we also have so much to offer.

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