



THE ASSOCIATION & VOICE OF THE US SEWN PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

## Can't Get Enough of that Alphabet Soup

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The term “Alphabet Soup” being used to describe the coalition of textile industry associations is appropriate on many levels. I had to Google the origin of the linguistic term, knowing it wasn't simply the genius of one of America's favorite soup brands. I proceeded down the rabbit hole of the internet, learning a lot more about the origin of the popular soup, which was created much further back than I'd ever imagined (dating back to at least 1877, in Paris). Alphabet soup is the metaphor that describes an abundance of acronyms or abbreviations, and the term dates back to FDR's “alphabet agencies” created during the New Deal. So now that this brief history lesson is out of the way, let's talk about textiles.

There are an abundance of textiles-related associations and groups which serve their respective interests, but because each serves as metaphorical branches from the same tree, there is some overlap and shared memberships among them. We all – even in our different ways – have a lot of shared goals and interests. It makes complete sense that we band together and collaborate. I understand why historically speaking, that may not have been done, and there's something to say about “staying in your lane,”; a lot has changed especially in the last five years. There have been several instances of collaboration to speak of, but to see 11 associations represented in the same space, for the first time ever, was pretty darn incredible.

After wrapping up the second busy day of Techtexil North America in Raleigh, NC, the industry assembled at Whiskey Kitchen for the inaugural “Alphabet Soup Shindig” to meet and greet, swap stories and share laughs, chat about the many challenges and opportunities we each face. There were faces seasoned and fresh alike, overflowing into the outdoor patio, and just tons of positive energy reverberating throughout the entire space (and no, it wasn't just the whiskey talking).

**Lynsey Jones (Executive Director, AAPN)** shared, “The Alphabet Soup Shindig was a first of its kind - where else could you go and see 11 textile associations under 1 roof successfully host 250+ industry executives? It was amazing to see so many people off their phones and engaged in networking! I cannot wait to do more collaborative events like this in the future.



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I view the Textile and Apparel Industry as one large, interconnected family, with all its challenges and opportunities. As a new Executive Director for a historic Association, this meeting was invaluable for gaining insights into the goals and efforts of my industry "brothers and sisters" and exploring how we can collaborate to support our members, the industry, and emerging talent. We are looking into areas like a collaborative calendar and additional co-hosted events, just to name a few. The Alphabet Soup Shindig was just the start!"

**Mark Hatton (Managing Director - Threads Americas, American & Efird; Chairman, SPESA)** spoke highly of the event - "It was incredibly exciting to be a part of this novel multi-association collaboration, which brought together a diverse swath of the textile and soft goods industry, who might not always tend to arrive at the same networking event. From old friends to new connections, it was a wonderful opportunity to engage with so many people. As our industry works more closely to support each other's mutual success, I expect that collaborative events such as the Alphabet Shindig will be a key part of the industry's future. It is indicative of the need to engage all stakeholders in our supply chain, and I think a tremendous first step forward."

In this world, we tend to specialize, which is important in building your expertise, but we can expand our horizons and our reach even more when we stretch ourselves a bit and expand our circles a little wider. In the creative arts world, it's common and encouraged to look for inspiration and even practice your craft outside of your chosen discipline. For example, if you're a painter, you're only going to get really good at it by painting a lot, but you might get \*even better\* if you mix it up sometimes and try ceramics or mosaic work. Getting outside of our respective boxes can yield amazing results.

"The amazing collaboration effort to pull together the Alphabet Soup Shindig is a testament to the extended family that is the domestic textile industry. Although each of the organizations that helped plan this event may cater to different types of industry members, at the end of the day it takes all of us from every textile sector to keep this industry alive and thriving in the US. I hope this was just the first of many Alphabet Soup Shindigs to come!" - **Tanya Wade (PPE/Textile Resource Lab Manager, Manufacturing Solutions Center)**

"The recent Alphabet Soup Shindig during the TTNA show in Raleigh was a huge success - it brought together people from the entire supply chain and was a much needed collaboration effort of many great associations. To all be together to share ideas for the greater good of our industry was inspiring and energizing. It was a sold out event and, no doubt, could easily double in size in future years. I truly hope we continue down this path as it will only lead to more relationships to further advance our efforts!" - **Amy Bircher Bruyn (CEO and Founder, MMI Textiles, Inc.)**

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“The energy and buzz at the event was great! This was my first time attending TTNA and the Alphabet Soup Shindig. I thought the event was really well done and provided a great opportunity to meet new people and network.” - **Melissa Dixon (Director of Product, National Safety Apparel)**

Personally, I enjoyed meeting a lot of new-to-me faces, and even connecting some new dots - those moments where you find commonalities and mutual connections you didn't even realize. The networking here was hard to beat. It's a moment, you might ask yourself:

“Why hasn't this been done before?” The question was raised on more than one occasion at last week's Association meeting and the subsequent Shindig.

The industry ecosystem we operate within is incredibly diverse and intricate. We witnessed this last Wednesday night, as brands, retailers, designers, manufacturers, suppliers, chemists, engineers, academics, consultants, and association partners gathered in Raleigh for the Shindig. Connecting these various industry links is critical. And we saw that cohesion start to take shape last week. Talk about an awesome thing to experience firsthand!

We know that working in silos isn't good for anyone, or any business. The more we work together, the better off we'll be. So, here's to continued efforts in collaboration (and the next whiskey bar!).” - **Maggie McDonald (Vice President, SPESA)**

The industry has deep historical roots, much like the Alphabet Soup moniker coined in FDR's day. Setting aside politics, we know that in the short term, the New Deal programs helped improve the lives of people suffering from the events of the Depression. In the long run, New Deal programs that still exist today play a key role in the economic and social affairs of the nation. I optimistically believe that, in a similar way, the Alphabet Soup Collective can serve a similar purpose – helping to create, nurture and strengthen connections and collaborative opportunities between associations and their members, so that we may all benefit together. It may start with a Shindig, but it has the legs to be much bigger than a social event.

“As the World faces yet another round of volatile, unpredictable challenges, from supply chains, workforce challenges and inflation to conflicts abroad, our industry must ask: What can we all do together, as we face these challenges? The first Shindig will foster Collaboration, Corporation and Partnering, up and down the Textile Industry vertical supply chain.” - **Frank Henderson (President, Henderson Sewing Machine Co.)**

# SEAMS

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And with that note, cheers to our very bright future!



The **Alphabet Soup Collective** consists of:

- [AATCC](#) | American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists
- [AAPN](#) | Americas Apparel Producers' Network
- [ATA](#) | Advanced Textiles Association
- [ATMA](#) | American Textile Machinery Association
- [INDA](#) | Association of the Nonwovens Fabrics Industry
- [NALA](#) | North American Linen Association
- [NWI](#) | The Nonwovens Institute
- [SEAMS](#) | The Association & Voice of the U.S. Sewn Products Industry
- [SPESA](#) | Sewn Products Equipment & Suppliers of the Americas
- [STA](#) | Southern Textile Association
- [SYFA](#) | The Synthetic Yarn and Fabric Association

**EVENT PHOTOS** | Our Beloved Photographer/Good Times Commander in Chief, Devin Steele, has shared his photos from the event which can be accessed [here](#). We encourage you to share your own event photos on social media using hashtag **#AlphabetSoupShindig**

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