Winter Whispers of Optimism

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Twenty Twenty-Five, and what a ride so far! It seems from my recent reading and conversations that we all are working on a number of initiatives for the new year, trying to find balance between being proactive and reactive to the times.

January kicked off with two tradeshows – SHOT Show in the desert of Las Vegas, and Texworld NYC in cold, snowy Manhattan. Many of our members participated in SHOT, including our leaders Will Duncan and Britt Moore; as such, I was asked to represent the organization on the East Coast. I jumped at the opportunity, as it had been several years since my last visit, and I thought it would be great to meet new people, and visit with vendors and industry colleagues, and of course talk up our great Association.

Texworld NYC was fairly busy each day. In the SEAMS booth, I met with several attendees whose brands were interested in Made in USA manufacturing. Unfortunately, there were a very small number of U.S. suppliers present at this show. I was happy however to see some fellow SEAMS members who walked the show - Mitch Cahn of Unionwear and Ryan Smith of Printcraft. I spoke at the Exhibitor Pitch Stage, shared information about SEAMS and how people could utilize our network, resources and membership – and there was great interest there. This confirms to me that this show has some real opportunities for our members to get in front of brands who are eager to either move or diversify their supply chain, or who are starting out and want to keep things close to home.

Unionwear exhibited in 2024, and they shared that they had a good experience. Printcraft walked the show for the first time this year, and is strongly considering exhibiting in future editions.

Ryan Smith states that while there wasn't "much benefit to walking Texworld NYC Winter Edition as a trim supplier, [as] there were only a few domestic exhibitors, which are the majority of our market," that he "met a few people at the SEAMS booth who were producing domestically, so it makes me think that exhibiting would be more beneficial. Additionally, the overall energy felt great, and the Textile Talks were super interesting and passionate."

Both January shows took place the same week as the Inauguration, and thus was a hot topic of discussion. I listened in on some of these conversations as part of the Tech Talks, particularly one that focused on tariffs, which was popular, as we know a lot will change this year. I asked my colleagues who attended both shows for their thoughts on the market:

Ryan Smith shared, “We are sensing more confidence in the market, specifically in furniture and textiles. It seems that optimism for domestic investment is on the rise with promising signals from the Trump administration. It is all too soon to tell exactly what the year holds, but we are feeling more confident in a rejuvenated and more stabilized supply chain.”

Back in Las Vegas, similar sentiments were shared regarding outlook on the year ahead:

Kevin McCarter (Clover Knits) noted, “Our U.S. supply chain has taken some tough hits over the past two years. We are hoping for an uptick in demand industry wide that will strengthen the balance sheet of everyone up and down the textile supply chain.”

Britt Moore (BK Fabrics LLC) stated, “I foresee a lot of inconsistencies in the U.S. supply chain for the first half of 2025, as everyone learns how the new Administration’s policies will impact the market. I expect more stability later in 2025 and 2026; however it is yet to be seen [whether] the net impact is positive or negative. Government awards and programs are one area where increased demand should be seen; however this area is also likely to see the messiest demand spikes and pullbacks in the first half of 2025. In short, I am expecting a lot of turbulence near-term, with the hope of stability longer term.”

On the show itself, I received glowing reviews. Geoff Senko (Ocean State Innovations) remarked that “SHOT Show 2025 was nothing short of incredible. With the largest Supplier Showcase in the event’s history – boasting over 400 exhibitors and thousands of attendees – the energy and momentum throughout the convention center were undeniable. We have exhibited at this show for three years straight. The excitement was palpable, a testament to the strength of our industry heading into 2025. Our table was consistently bustling with activity as we showcased our extensive product lines, reinforcing OSI’s position as the premier source for textile raw materials in the tactical space.”

He said he was impressed with the response from attendees, noting a bright future, “From military procurement specialists to tactical gear manufacturers, the interest in cutting-edge materials and innovative solutions was higher than ever. Beyond showcasing our products, this was an invaluable opportunity to connect with industry partners, discuss emerging trends and solidify OSI’s commitment to supporting warfighters with the highest-quality materials available.”

Clover Knits is a fifth-time exhibitor at the SHOT Supplier Showcase, and Kevin McCarter was very pleased, “SHOT is a good show for us as a replacement for the Outdoor Retailer Show. We have existing customers and suppliers that we see, along with the opportunity to meet new customers. We thought the show this year was like past years in terms of energy and attendance.”

Britt Moore has been attending and exhibiting at SHOT for six years, though this is the first time showing for BK Fabrics. He remarks that the growing show has “continued to build on the energy of previous years and was as busy as [ever]. There was a lot of positive energy for both exhibitors and attendees, with a lot of the excitement coming from the change in Administration. This energy carried over into interest in U.S. manufacturing due to the concern of possible tariffs and a more U.S.-first focus. In addition, there was also a section of attendees that voiced concern about [a lack of] control or insight into their supply chain from non-North American manufacturers. This lack of transparency had many interested in bringing their production back to the U.S.”

While the last month has been wrought with challenges and changes, some back and forth, overall there is still much optimism for our industry, and my hope is that things will start to settle, and positive outcomes prevail. Drawing upon recent conversations, along with themes and lessons from recent shows, it makes me look forward to fresh perspectives at our hemisphere’s largest show, Texprocess Americas in May, and for tightened collaborative efforts between associations, and among the domestic supply chain. I feel confident that the SEAMS Pavilion will be busy as ever.