



THE ASSOCIATION & VOICE OF THE US SEWN PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

Connection and collaboration drive momentum ahead of SEAMS Spring Networking Conference

By Devin Steele

With the SEAMS Spring Networking Conference just a week away in Greensboro, NC, momentum appears to be building across the sewn products, textiles and apparel industry at a pivotal time. Manufacturers are navigating rising costs, shifting sourcing strategies, global uncertainty and increasing demand for U.S.-based production — all while searching for practical ways to collaborate, innovate and grow.

That is where SEAMS continues to matter. For more than five decades, the association has served as a connector for the domestic sewn products supply chain, bringing together brands, manufacturers, suppliers, service providers and innovators who may otherwise operate in separate lanes. In an industry where relationships, responsiveness and trust can be just as important as pricing or capacity, SEAMS has long provided a place where business gets done and partnerships begin.

As sourcing strategies evolve and supply chains become more regionalized, that mission has only grown in importance. Many companies are reevaluating where products are made, how quickly they can react to demand and which partners can deliver quality, transparency and speed. Those conversations often start face to face — and that is one reason the SEAMS conference remains relevant.

Known for combining business development with real-world insight, SEAMS' events are designed to create business opportunities through connection, education and collaboration. This year's conference agenda includes the annual golf tournament, a tour of Origin Manufacturing, the debut of WOVEN (Women Optimizing Vision, Excellence, & Networking), educational sessions, networking receptions and a speaker lineup focused on the issues shaping the market right now.

SEAMS events have traditionally attracted a broad cross-section of the industry — cut-and-sew operations, textile mills, logistics providers, technology companies, trim suppliers, sourcing specialists and brand representatives. That mix matters because solutions today rarely come from one segment alone. They come from collaboration across the chain.

Amy Bircher Bruyn, Founder and President of SEAMS' member MMI Textiles, sees this as an especially important moment. Bircher Bruyn, who last week was elected Chair of the National Council of Textile Organizations (NCTO), will keynote Day 2 with "From Fiber to Future: Leadership in a Changing Textile Industry."

"I think this is a very important moment for the U.S. textile and sewn products industry," she said. "We are seeing more companies take a harder look at their sourcing strategies, supply chain resilience, and the value of strong domestic partners. As attendees come to Greensboro, I hope they are thinking not only about today's challenges, but also about how we work together to build a stronger and more competitive U.S. industry for the future."

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Her comments reflect a broader shift underway. After years of disruption, many brands and retailers now place greater value on reliability, shorter lead times and the ability to communicate quickly with trusted partners. That can favor U.S. and Western Hemisphere suppliers able to respond faster and offer stronger visibility into production.

Technology is another major theme. Justin Hershoran, Senior Solutions Architect at SEAMS' member Aptean, said manufacturers are eager — and sometimes uncertain — about how emerging tools can improve operations.

“The industry seems to be excited — and scared at the same time — of AI,” said Hershoran, who will participate in a Fireside Chat, “A Discussion Regarding the State of Manufacturing Technology,” with SEAMS' Executive Director, Will Duncan. “Everyone wants it, but most don't know what it is or what it can do for them. What it can do for them will be transformative.”

From planning systems and production visibility to forecasting and efficiency gains, technology is becoming less optional and more essential. Conferences like SEAMS give companies a chance to hear practical use cases, ask questions and better understand where investments may create value.

Hershoran also sees favorable tailwinds for the region.

“We have suddenly had some strong wind at our back between tariffs, a drive to move production back to the Americas and higher costs pushing that agenda,” he said. “We also see companies more willing to invest in their future with great new products, both software and equipment.”

From a sourcing perspective, Kristie Rhodes, Manager of Product Development – Wovens at SEAMS' member Cotton Incorporated, said ongoing disruption is creating openings for domestic and regional suppliers.

“With the uncertainty being faced by brands and retailers with global disruptions, opportunities are presenting themselves for nearshoring and reshoring,” Rhodes said. “U.S. textiles and apparel manufacturers can capitalize on their reliability, stability and traceability advantages.”

Those advantages continue to resonate in a market where speed matters, consumers increasingly ask questions about sourcing and brands seek dependable partners. U.S.-based production may not fit every product category, but for many programs it offers meaningful strategic benefits.

Al Carey, Executive Chairman of the board at UNIFI, said the past several years have tested the industry — but also created an opportunity to learn from one another. Carey will speak on “Servant Leadership” during the conference.

“For those of us in the textile industry, we've faced plenty of adversity over the past three years,” Carey said. “I believe the tide will turn, but there are important lessons from that time that we should be sharing with each other.”

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That mindset underscores the value of gatherings like SEAMS, where those lessons, experiences and ideas can be exchanged in real time.

That is why organizations like SEAMS remain important. They help shorten the distance between opportunity and execution. They introduce members to new capabilities, trusted suppliers and strategic partners. They create an environment where companies can compare notes on shared challenges and uncover business opportunities that might never emerge through email alone.

In uncertain times, there is real value in being in the room. Conversations in hallways, introductions over lunch, plant tours and peer-to-peer exchanges often produce as much value as formal presentations.

Greensboro will offer exactly that next week — a chance for the industry to come together, strengthen relationships and help shape what's next.

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