



**INDUSTRY:** Fashion



## JL International Frees Up Quality Designer Time and Adds New Inter-Collections using Lectra Fashion PLM

### MARKET

Apparel

### LOCATION

Bordeaux, France

### CHALLENGE

Organize a complex development process, streamlining working methods, optimizing expertise and maintaining quality.

### BENEFITS

Lectra Fashion PLM enables companies to manage, organize and monitor collection progress in order to control costs and guarantee quality and deadlines.

Based in Bordeaux, France, JL International distributes ready-to-wear garments through its own retail chain and other large distribution channels. With eight private brands representing various markets, JL International achieved 75% of its €50 million 2007 revenues through sales of finished garments to its 140 Styleco stores, some fully owned and some partner-run, located primarily in France. Apparel sales under separate brand names to large French retailers such as Super U and Leclerc accounted for 25% of the company's revenues.

With 60 years' experience in the textile industry, JL International employs 200 employees worldwide, including those in its purchasing and sourcing management office in Shanghai, China, and another 120 in its 23,000 m<sup>2</sup> of offices and warehouse in southwestern France.

The company manages the design and measurement specification aspects of product development in-house, while pattern-making and manufacturing are outsourced to approximately 100 suppliers in Asia, who return finished samples and 9 million approved products annually to the Bordeaux warehouses for inspection, storage, and distribution. Their 3,000 models per year represent two seasonal collections for six different markets: children, juniors, young men, men, women, and plus-size women.

JL International stands out among the competition in that it has its own stores and brands and therefore understands and knowledgeably addresses its clients' needs and challenges.

## The challenge

JL International's expansion began to accelerate over the past two years, growing from 120 stores to 140 stores in just twelve months. Sales jumped more than 16% from 2006 to 2007. The "fast fashion" phenomenon has also been pushing the company to start planning for what they call "intercollections"—two midseason collections in addition to their regular collections.

"Our regular collections are prepared 18 months in advance," said Laëtitia Hugé, Director, Children's Division, at JL International. "That's good for classic articles, but our clients are hesitant to buy anything particularly trendy because they can't be sure what's going to still be fashionable by the time their products arrive. Our inter-collections are meant to respond to that need. By designing the inter-collection articles much later, we can give our clients the opportunity to make last-minute purchases and feel confident about them."

Adding these inter-collections would mean not only increasing the workload but also, in order to offer "last-minute" articles, significantly reducing their total development time. Hugé said JL International started looking into Lectra's CAD/CAM solutions to help gain time and productivity. "Originally we thought we might get some design software," she said. "But when Lectra's experts came to investigate our needs, they understood that what we really needed was a more advanced development

management solution like Lectra Fashion PLM."

JL International was using a paper-based management and tracking system, with each user, from designers to technicians to administrative assistants, working from different software programs and printing files onto hard copies which were stored in binders. Each product had its own file, made up of reference numbers and product descriptions, stored in the binder. Comparative product summary tables were created manually with Microsoft Excel, printed out, and bound into booklets for review.

"It was a very long and tedious process," Hugé said. "But it was especially a complicated and risky process because of the many possibilities for errors or lost information. We would also sometimes have parallel versions of the same file getting modified in different departments. So we were spending an enormous amount of time fact-checking, validating, and re-checking."

Changes were often made in pencil on the individual print-outs and were allowed to accumulate before being incorporated into a computer file and reprinted.

Hugé said their designers were sometimes the last to learn about changes to their designs. "Our suppliers would tell us that a certain button or zipper wouldn't be feasible, so we'd make a note on the paper about the change. And then it wouldn't be till months later when we received the prototypes that they would find out that their work had been changed."

## More about

### Lectra Fashion PLM



Specifically developed for the fashion market, Lectra's 100% web-based PLM solution allows companies to organize, manage, and share all data related to the development of products and collections. Iterative processes of sourcing and quality assurance are easily managed through the application.

### More about JL International

*"Beyond being merely a collaborative platform, Lectra Fashion PLM is a unifying system which has enabled us to improve the communication from one department to another. We have total visibility on our collections now. There's just no comparison to the way we were working before."*



**Laëtitia Hugé**  
Director Children's Division  
JL International (France)

Product developer Valérie Goudeau said they often had to interrupt the designers for technical questions because a supplier or client needed more information than what was provided on the paper files. “It seemed it was always at their busiest times that we had to bother them and break their train of thought in the middle of their artistic projects,” she said.

Before working with Lectra Fashion PLM, JL International also had a lack of visual information exchange. “We were really all working blind,” Hugé said. “Blind because we couldn’t see what changes our colleagues were making, but also because, with the exception of the designers, we couldn’t actually see what product we were working on. So product developers, assistants, even managers just had to try to visualize the products based on the descriptions, but mostly we were just working with reference numbers and color codes. That’s really not ideal in the fashion industry. You really need to always be working with a visual product, because fashion is a visual art and visual industry.”

Finally, JL International was hoping to find a way to improve the presentation of their sales materials, particularly at a time when fast-fashion competitors were beginning to solicit their client base more frequently. “When we prepared documents for our clients, there were no photos, no color swatch thumbnails, just descriptions of the products and the colors,” she said. “It wasn’t very commercial, and it wasn’t going to help us stay ahead of the competition.”

## The solution

JL International has just completed its first collection cycle using Lectra Fashion PLM. “There’s just no comparison to the way we were working before,” Hugé said. “Now, we experience the product so much more at each step of the process. Updates are continuous, and everyone stays up to date on what’s going on with each product.” Specifically developed for the fashion industries, Lectra Fashion PLM optimizes the competencies and collaborative work and improves the performance of all participants within the company and in its ecosystem. It allows companies to organize, manage, and share all data related to the development of products and collections. Iterative processes of sourcing (prototyping management, request for quote, and costing) and quality assurance are easily managed under the solution. Lectra Fashion PLM is fully configurable and built on a 100% Web-based platform, meaning that each participant in the product development cycle—designers, product developers, managers, business partners, suppliers, etc.—can access Lectra Fashion PLM 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from anywhere in the world via the Internet. Precise user profiles and access rights ensure that data access is secure. Lectra Fashion PLM integrates perfectly with Lectra’s state-of-the-art applications for fashion design, pattern-making, and prototyping and interfaces with enterprise management applications.

Having all participants working on the same platform with the latest

versions of the files has been a huge advantage for JL International since working with Lectra Fashion PLM, according to Hugé. “Communication on the products has been great, and the information exchange has been very fluid,” she said. “It’s so much easier for us.”

Abandoning their paper system has eliminated the need for constant, tedious fact-checking. “No more paper trails,” she said. “And no more wasted paper, either, which is a non-negligible advantage!” Lectra Fashion PLM has also brought significant visibility to JL International on several levels. Not only do they now have a physical image online of each product at its current state of development, including color schemes, but they also have a broader scope of the project status. “We have total visibility on the collection now,” Hugé said. “And project leaders have much more visibility as well, as we can always look at Lectra Fashion PLM at any time to see the progress of each item, and we can add our comments right into the file.”

This visibility is an advantage for the client as well, Hugé said, facilitating communication and presentations. “Lectra Fashion PLM easily produces professional catalogues for us that we can pass on to our clients,” she said. “The catalogue is also a useful tool internally,” Hugé said, “as it makes collection analysis simple and efficient.”

After only three days of training, Hugé’s team was working resourcefully with Lectra Fashion

PLM. The designers, at the beginning of the chain, appreciated their new-found tranquility during the technical processes. "We're free to just focus on our work of design without distractions," said designer Jordan Delmotte.

Goudeau agreed. "I really welcomed the implementation of Lectra Fashion PLM Product Development," she said. "We are much more autonomous than before, and we have access to all the information we need without having to bother the designers."

"It might not be directly useful in a creative sense," said designer Virginie Monin, "but Lectra Fashion PLM is undeniably useful for us at a global company level."

Lectra's expert auditing and technical teams integrated quickly with JL International's teams and provided the company with an efficient, effective, and customized implementation of Lectra Fashion PLM, perfectly adapted to JL International's specific needs, according to Hugé. "We were very impressed with the ability of Lectra's team to really grasp the processes and workings of our company so quickly," she said. "Not only did they speak the language of the industry, but they caught on quickly and took note of how we work."

Communication has been excellent, very open, and it's clear that Lectra's team leader is constantly looking out for us rather than himself. That's the kind of trust a relationship like this has to have, and I'm glad we were able to find it with Lectra."

One season after installing Lectra Fashion PLM, Hugé has no regrets. "Lectra Fashion PLM is a powerful solution which covers the entire development process not only for our collections but also for our marketing," she said. "Beyond being merely a collaborate platform, Lectra Fashion PLM is a unifying system which has enabled us to improve the communication from one department to another. By integrating rather complex processes, each department has adapted to the new working method to have a better flow of information."

"The implementation of Lectra Fashion PLM within the teams is being carried out progressively according to the needs of each user," Hugé said. "Lectra has been and continues to be very proactive and reactive in resolving issues and in the evolution of the solution itself."

## **ABOUT LECTRA**

Lectra is the world leader in integrated technology solutions that automate, streamline, and accelerate product design, development, and manufacturing processes for industries using soft materials. Lectra develops the most advanced specialized software and cutting systems and provides associated services to a broad array of markets including fashion (apparel, accessories, footwear), automotive (car seats and interiors, airbags), furniture, as well as a wide variety of other market sectors, such as the aeronautical and marine industries, wind power, personal protective equipment. Lectra serves 23,000 customers in more than 100 countries with 1,500 employees. The company is listed on Euronext Paris. For more information, please visit [www.lectra.com](http://www.lectra.com).