



## APPAREL'S TOP 50 INNOVATORS


**Apparel** Magazine salutes many of the key forward-thinking firms shaping the industry in this first-ever special issue, and profiles their leadership, resourcefulness, reliance on cutting-edge technologies and the unique business partnerships and strategies that have contributed to their success.

REPORTING BY STACEY KUSTERBECK, JORDAN K. SPEER AND MICHAEL D. COLE.

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# Apparel's 2008 TOP INNOVATORS

What makes an apparel company truly an innovator?

Many of the answers lie in the pages that follow, which honor our first-ever **Apparel** Innovators.

While the strategies of our recipients are diverse, the common thread binding them together is that it does take a village. In today's overwhelmingly challenging industry, leadership, teamwork, technology and reliable strategic business partners all must invariably converge together.

To all of our honorees, **Apparel** Magazine tips its hat to you for your resourcefulness, your creativity and most importantly, your innovation.

*Finnish company Marimekko, known for its bright-colored printed fabrics and simple styles, has been recognized for making important contributions to fashion throughout its history.*

## TOP INNOVATORS

# Burlington Coat Factory

**HEADQUARTERS:** Burlington, NJ | [www.coat.com](http://www.coat.com)

**NOMINATED BY:** Reflexis Systems Inc. | [www.reflexisinc.com](http://www.reflexisinc.com)



To boost in-store operational productivity and ensure the consistent execution of its retail strategy, Burlington Coat Factory implemented an enterprise-wide task management application — something that less than 20 percent of apparel manufacturers have done, according to a May 2007 Gartner report.

The company implemented Reflexis Systems' Task Management, Mobility and Store Walk solutions over a 15-week period beginning in August 2007. The goals were to streamline communications and workflow, monitor compliance and improve store operations, all for a better in-store customer experience.

The Reflexis System, called Store Action Planner by Burlington, saves store managers time and helps recover the 2 percent to 5 percent of sales typically lost due to inadequate human resources.

"We are able to know who has or has not done markdowns according to timelines, and quantify the available on-hand merchandise by matching store surveys versus SKU displays," says Thomas Couch, Burlington's manager of Store Action Planner.

The PDA version of Store Walk is used, giving field managers the freedom to walk the floor without spending time behind a PC. Managers can now view projects and tasks before they even reach the store. "We are able to provide senior level executives with reports for their prospective territories on compliance," says Couch. Stores

can be alerted on product recalls so merchandise can be pulled off floors within hours nationwide.

The Reflexis solution allowed the company to cut down 95 percent on its emails, with 1,773 people logged into the system every day and 16 different floor walks loaded into the system.

"This gives us the ability to hold everyone accountable. As a company, we are at 94 percent compliance with corporate projects," says Gloria Johnson, vice president of store compliance. "We do not waste nearly as much time, and time becomes money in terms of helping the customer." ◀