



FROM A LABOR INTENSIVE TO AN INFORMATION INTENSIVE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

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Consumers and technology are guiding the developments of textile/apparel firms for the next millennium. By the year 2050, the world population will have almost doubled to 11 billion. The industry will have to satisfy this increasing demand in a fast-pace global com-puterized environment. Technological development will focus on real time information flow, new faster and flexible processes, and mass customization systems integrating the consumer in the pre-production creativity and design phase. The three vital technological tools of the future will be the Internet, computer-integrated intelligent information systems, and digital technology. However, these tools are still young and need to be fine tuned in order to become fully efficient while the industry adapts to the array of new possibilities all this technology has to offer.

IT requires a strategic vision on how to use it with investment not only on the technology but also in the people, skills, organization, and alliances needed to interpret and use the information most creatively and efficiently. Therefore, it is critical for the industry to become integrally involved with IT developers and emerging strategic business partners. A new breed of companies crossing the traditional boundaries of the industry will form the new millennium's textile/apparel complex where IT systems integrating multivariables and func-tions will offer powerful simulation and cooperative business management tools.