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PLM SUPPORTS CONSCIOUS FASHION
ARMEDANGELS AND CENTRIC DESIGN
A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

ARMEDANGELS

FAIR FASHION

ARMEDANGELS was founded in 2007 in Cologne, Germany. The clothing label's philosophy focuses on promoting fair working conditions and using sustainable materials in its supply chain. With a mission to produce 'fair fashion instead of fast fashion', ARMEDANGELS sells a variety of apparel online for men and women, as well as through major retail stores and boutiques in six countries.

Using sustainably produced materials such as organic cotton, organic linen, organic wool, recycled polyester, Lenzing Modal® and Tencel® is a core part of ARMEDANGELS' commitment to protecting the environment. ARMEDANGELS also works with independent organizations such as Fairtrade to ensure that workers are treated fairly at every stage of production.

ARMEDANGELS' commitment to producing clothing that is both ethical and fashionable has brought the company success in Germany and beyond. ARMEDANGELS has pioneered truly sustainable fashion, producing contemporary collections that have changed the image of environmentally-friendly clothing.

FROM PAPER TO PLM

ARMEDANGELS started out making T-shirts but has considerably expanded and diversified its product collection, now releasing 4 collections per year for both their MEN and WOMEN departments.

As Martin Höfeler, CEO at ARMEDANGELS says, the company needed to reappraise workflows and operations in order to keep up with the demands of success.

"In the early days, we used transparent paper for commenting on fit and measurements after fitting the products ourselves," says Höfeler. "Employing technical product developers and designers brought a more professional and structural approach to the business."

"However, we still had limited resources. We created structured stylesheets in Excel to promote a more organized way of working with styles, while keeping the flexibility and openness required by designers. While this gave us better structure, it also introduced additional problems."

Höfeler explains that ARMEDANGELS' commitment to fair trade practices and sustainable, organic materials added another layer of complex data to its product lifecycle.

"Being fair and sustainable means knowing, documenting and continuously improving our complete supply chain, starting from the bottom up with our materials, such as wool and cotton. With three delivery dates in spring and autumn, and two in summer and winter, we're currently developing around 600 styles per year with 1500 color variants which has added complexity to tracking partner relations, supply chains and factory audits."

The conclusion was clear: in order to handle an expanding product range and a corresponding amount of data, ARMEDANGELS needed to invest in a Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) solution.

SEARCHING FOR A SOLUTION

ARMEDANGELS begun their PLM search with a defined vision of what they wanted to achieve. As Höfeler notes, there were many compelling reasons to adopt a PLM solution.

"In terms of design, we wanted to make it possible for team members to simultaneously edit styles in real time," says Höfeler. "We knew that a PLM solution would keep information up to date. It's also important to be able to create collection overviews to get the bigger picture. Additionally, all of this work can be made much more efficient with a materials library, with correctly referenced materials and supplier codes."

> " DATA QUALITY HAS BEEN IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY RESULTING IN CLOSE TO ZERO DATA MISMATCHES WHILE TIME SPENT UPDATING PRODUCT INFORMATION ACROSS STYLES AND SEASONS HAS BEEN REDUCED BY ROUGHLY 50%. "

CHALLENGES

+ Excel spreadsheets could not accommodate extra layers of data

+ Tracking information related to sustainability and fair working practices

+ Wanted to improve communication with suppliers

+ Need for a materials library with correctly referenced materials and suppliers

+ Unable to edit styles simultaneously in real time

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"Communication and transparency are very important to ARMEDANGELS," continues Höfeler. "We knew that the right PLM solution could help us communicate more effectively with suppliers and document our supply chain in detail. Generally, we expected that a PLM solution would help us work more efficiently in style development and production, and would greatly improve the quality of data we produce and use daily."

FUN FEATURES, SERIOUS SUPPORT

After careful consideration, ARMEDANGELS chose to implement Centric Software's flagship PLM solution, Centric 8.

"Centric PLM is modern, feature-driven and can be actively extended with additional modules and apps based on customer interests and needs," says Matthias Wirtz, IT Project Manager at ARMEDANGELS. "It introduces the perfect balance of structural elements and layers of data, while not restricting users in their usual workflows and creativity. Quite simply, it's fun to use!"

"However, it's not just about the ease of use and interesting features – Centric PLM is serious about supporting the workflows of designers and technical development. You can roll out calendars and milestones, support reviews with sample management and evaluations, and iterate on data to cut down repetitious tasks."

Implementing Centric 8 PLM was very straightforward thanks to the platform's built in best-practice process support which allowed ARMEDANGLES to manage the implementation process on their own with coaching from Centric's Global Services team.

Wirtz points to Centric PLM's flexibility and visibility as a key factor in the company's decision.

"Centric PLM has a flexible data model that enables our local IT departments to extend the attributes of different modules for their own particular uses," says Wirtz. "From a management point of view, it's easy to analyze data and get insights about the status of the collection or the efficiency of style development operations."

ARMEDANGELS focused on style creation, materials management, sourcing and the Adobe Illustrator extension in the initial phase of implementing Centric PLM.

"Eliminating the need for Excel spreadsheets during style development was one of our main goals," explains Wirtz.

"We are also operating a fully automated bi-directional integration between Centric PLM and our ERP system for transferring master and style-related data. This enables us to significantly reduce the internal process time for getting styles ready for our sales team by 90%!"

ALREADY SOLVING PROBLEMS

Even from the early stages of their Centric PLM journey, ARMEDANGELS began to see results.

"We started this project expecting to eventually resolve the issues we were experiencing as a result of our growth, but a lot of these problems have been solved already!" exclaims Wirtz.

"Data quality has been improved significantly resulting in close to zero data mismatches while time spent updating product information across styles and seasons has been reduced by roughly 50%." Wirtz also comments on Centric PLM's View Definition model, "This function allows us to collect actionable insights within minutes, even our designers enjoy using it to gather overviews and this saves valuable time for everyone when preparing for meetings."

"We first introduced Centric PLM to the MEN team, including Design, Buying, Technical Development and Product Management. After evaluating our initial implementation and iterating with business users we rolled out Centric PLM companywide after completing one sampling process," explains Wirtz.

As Wirtz concludes, the ARMEDANGELS experience of Centric PLM and working with the Centric team has been positive and productive.

"Responses are fast! It's a pleasure to work with the Centric team, who are open-minded and focused on customer interests. They quickly implement solutions and assistance in setting things up as they are intended. We have a small, young and dynamic team on our side as well, who helped us adapt our workflows when needed to align with system functionality."

"We're confident that Centric will stay ahead of the competition through product innovation, allowing them to keep up with the challenges and changes the fashion industry currently faces."

"We're convinced we made the right decision when we chose Centric."

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ABOUT ARMEDANGELS

For the past 10 years, the Cologne-based label ARMEDANGELS has been proving that fashion can be done differently: ECO & FAIR. No slave wages, no chemical madness, no cheap mass production. The simple idea to print T-Shirts and gather money for charity projects by selling them turned into an enterprise that today is one of the biggest Eco & Fair fashion labels in Europe. With a team of 80 and four collections a year, ARMEDANGELS shows that sustainability and great product design do not rule each other out.

ABOUT CENTRIC SOFTWARE

From its headquarters in Silicon Valley and offices in trend capitals around the world, Centric Software provides a Digital Transformation Platform for the most prestigious names in fashion, retail, footwear, luxury, outdoor and consumer goods. Centric Visual Innovation Platform (VIP) is a visual, fully digital collection of boards for touch-based devices like iPad, iPhone and large-scale, touch-screen televisions. Centric VIP transforms decision making and automates execution to truly collapse time to market and distance to trend. Centric's flagship product lifecycle management (PLM) platform, Centric 8, delivers enterprise-class merchandise planning, product development, sourcing, business planning, quality, and collection management functionality tailored for fast-moving consumer industries. Centric SMB packages extended PLM including innovative technology and key industry learnings tailored for small businesses.

Centric Software has received multiple industry awards, including the Frost & Sullivan Global Product Differentiation Excellence Award in Retail, Fashion, and Apparel PLM in 2016 and Frost & Sullivan's Global Retail, Fashion, and Apparel PLM Product Differentiation Excellence Award in 2012. Red Herring named Centric to its Top 100 Global list in 2013, 2015, and 2016.

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