RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

In this new WSA feature, we look at another example of how supply chain collaboration can help companies throughout the textile and apparel industry overcome challenges.

The best way to compete is to collaborate



JRC Reflex supplies many of the most prominent outdoor and sports brands in the world.

adidas

Retro-reflective materials supplier JRC Reflex supplies glow-in-the-dark strips and flashes to many of the most prominent outdoor and sports brands in the world, but its founder, Bernard Cugerone, acknowledges that his company is a small player.

He explains: "It's important for me to be careful not to close any doors. It would be ideal for me to be able to specify the fabric maker, the trim maker and the machine maker that we would prefer to work with, but I supply reflective material. However, I will say, and I do tell people, that Macpi's technology is a good complement to ours."

Italian textile machinery manufacturer Macpi produces machines for garments, for the hospitality industry and, of greatest interest to JRC Reflex, textile bonding. Technology such as its 335.32 machine can apply an adhesive film to open or tubular garments and has edge-bending to enable the application of these materials on garments with challenging shapes, such as bras.

"It's not that we have, or would seek, an exclusive relationship with Macpi," the JRC Reflex founder continues, "absolutely not. Our customers make what they want and they use the glue and the machines that they want. It's their money. But if I am to give a guarantee that my product, my retro-reflective material, will work the way I have told my customers it will work, I need to know whose machines they intend to use."

This really has very little to do with operational practice because, he insists, JRC material will



Reflective stretch fabric created from glass beads on polyamide and elastane and applied to piping.

JRC Reflex

bond better to a piece of fabric for sports apparel or to a shoe, even the back part of a shoe, after five seconds' welding on a Macpi machine than after two hours on rival equipment, in spite of the extra heat and energy (at extra cost to the user) his material will be subjected to over those two hours.

"I have spoken to a prominent German manufacturer of underwear," he continues, "whom I would prefer not to name, but who has told me that it does not feel it is buying Macpi machines; it is buying Macpi knowledge."

Of Macpi's chief executive, Luca Mosso, Bernard Cugerone says that he "likes a challenge", which is certainly a compliment. But he pays Mr Mosso and his company a greater compliment by saying that Macpi has opened doors for JRC Reflex that the reflective material provider would never have been able to open alone. "I'm talking about doors that would have been impossible for me to open on my own," he says, "because I am just too small. And I don't have enough time."

This is a reference to opportunities with customers, but he reveals that, when JRC decided to open a representative office in Hong Kong, to be closer to sports apparel and footwear manufacturers in Asia, it was Luca Mosso (who lived there for a number of years) who gave him the advice he needed, up to and including which lawyer to engage. "We exchange information," he says, "and that's an important part of the synergy that exists between Macpi and us."

In response

"What Bernard has said is really appreciated and actually is totally true," says Mr Mosso. "Besides the fact that JRC provides a high-quality product that matches our machines, what I must highlight is the kind of synergy that has been created in order to provide our end-users with not just a simple reflective tape or a simple tool or machine, but a system, or more specifically a European way of working, which always offers innovation and a prompt response to customers."

He believes that the only way for a company like Macpi to beat the competition is to establish partnerships and understandings such as the one he has with JRC Reflex. To become caught up in a price war, or to continue concentrating on rivalries, will not pay off in the long run, he insists. And customers seem to appreciate this kind of openness, he adds, because the overall aim is to meet their needs better.

"At Macpi we have always said that a good and reliable machine is not enough to obtain a good product," Luca Mosso concludes. "We must have partners, such as JRC in this case, who offer top quality in order to get the best performance from the machine itself. I hope my comments make very clear how valuable collaboration with JRC Reflex and with Bernard Cugerone is for Macpi."

Users say they are not just buying Macpi machines, but Macpi knowledge.

Macpi

