

Reports



Are We Prepared?

The year 2000 and the potential computer problems that will accompany it are approaching quickly. GEAR For Sports began preparing for "Y2K" in mid-1996 by embarking on a complete overhaul of the information systems and technology base. As a result, we will convert to both new hardware and software called Oracle ERP, internally referred to as OASIS, on May 1, 1999. OASIS will not only address the infamous "Y2K" problem, but will also provide the information and tools we need to better serve our customers in the coming millennium. "Ultimately, our objective is to improve customer service. OASIS will enable us to decrease order lead time and cycle times, so customers can get their orders even quicker," said Bob Beggs, vice president, information systems.

"We're looking forward to having 'available to promise' information, or

ATP. With ATP, we can actually look at projected availability with the customer on the phone and give them accurate availability information on their order. If the specific goods are not in stock, we can provide an actual date they will be available," said Bob.

ATP will make it possible to predict and confirm shipments when the order is taken, rather than having to get back to the customer later after the information is researched. "We will be able to ship our customers what they want, when they want it," Bob said.

OASIS will enable us to decrease inventory levels and increase productivity for both office and production employees, making our business more efficient. "In the end, we expect OASIS to make it even easier to do business with GEAR," said Bob.

We will also be able to utilize the internet to serve customers in the near future. OASIS is web-enabled, which means it can work directly with the internet to allow us to interface with sales representatives, customers and suppliers via the Web.

"In the third calendar quarter of 1999, we plan to make ATP information available to sales representatives via the internet. This will allow the rep to check on the information from their laptop when sitting with the customer taking the order. Eventually, customers will be able to place re-orders automatically via the internet," said Bob.

Human Rights: An Evolving Issue For Apparel Manufacturers

The issue of human rights and existence of apparel manufacturing “sweatshops” is a prevalent social concern in today’s manufacturing environment. Although only a small number of apparel manufacturers actually do business with the sweatshops, the situation casts a negative light on the entire industry. At GEAR For Sports, a new position recently was created to help ensure the factories we work with are complying with the guidelines set up in our business codes of conduct.

John Joerger, newly-appointed director of human rights and codes of conduct compliance, said: “Although many companies take this issue seriously, there are only three I know of that actually have a job dedicated to it, and GEAR is one of them. My job reflects how serious company management is about this issue.”

Since the production of apparel is labor-intensive, human rights is a real concern for GEAR. “As an importer, we must be cognizant of competitive wages, humane working conditions and adequate facilities. We have 120 employees worldwide that help us enforce our codes of conduct by ensuring our factories comply. Long before this issue came to the forefront, we were in the factories

weekly. Our codes are posted in every facility we work with,” John said.

To continue learning effective ways to implement human rights policies, GEAR For Sports became a member of Business For Social Responsibility, a non-profit organization to help companies develop social responsibility policies. “Our human rights and codes compliance function will continue to develop as the issue evolves,” John said.

In the past few years, this issue has gained attention at colleges. College store customers can be confident when they choose our products that they were produced humanely by a supplier that has similar views on human rights. “It costs more for us to manufacture our apparel because of our high quality standards and refusal to work with sweatshops. Consequently, ours is not the least expensive apparel available. We feel it is more important to support human rights and produce quality apparel than to save a few bucks. Our merchandise must be produced humanely and ethically, and all factories we work with must support human rights,” John said.

SPOTLIGHTING

Getting to Know John Joerger

John Joerger, director of human rights and codes of conduct compliance at GEAR For Sports, started his career with a furniture manufacturer as a customer service manager in the international division. It was there that he became involved in international business. “I worked with international transportation and later became a licensed customs broker. I then came to GEAR as import/traffic manager, where all transportation, both international and domestic, and customs compliance is

handled,” John said.

Six months ago, John was promoted to director. His new responsibilities for human rights and codes compliance were a natural result of his international business expertise. “I’m proud the company has dedicated the proper resources to this issue with a director-level position. I’ll be intimately involved with the factories and will travel. We have zero tolerance for anyone who doesn’t comply with GEAR For Sports’ codes of conduct,” John said.

