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legislative column

by PAUL FOGLEMAN, Director, Hosiery Governmental Affairs Council

North Carolina voters are sending mixed messages to the political pundits.

Among Democratic voters, Sen. Hillary Clinton would defeat North Carolina's John Edwards in a primary, according to Public Policy Polling. But in late December, the same polling firm said that Edwards is the only Democratic candidate that would carry the state in a general election.

The poll concluded Edwards would win over Rudy Giuliani by 5 percentage points, Mike Huckabee by 7 points and Mitt Romney by 12 points. Conclusion: Edwards would pick up Republican votes.

The last time North Carolina supported a Democratic presidential candidate was in 1976 when another southerner—Jimmy Carter—was heading the ticket.

While Edwards finished second in the Iowa caucus and third in New Hampshire, he continues to pursue a vision for the presidency.

....

Dr. Scott Ralls, who will become the new president of the North Carolina Community Colleges next spring, is acquainted with the hosiery and textile industries. The selection of Ralls brought an enthusiastic reaction from insiders at the Hosiery Technology Center and the Textile Technology Center.

Dr. Ralls served on the advisory committee of the Industrial Extension Service at N.C. State University and was among the presenters when the North Carolina Alliance for Competitive Technologies (NC ACTS) received initial funding from the federal government. He was on the staff of the N.C. Department of Commerce.

Later Ralls moved to the N.C. Department of Community Colleges as director of workforce training programs. Five years ago he was named president of Craven Community College in New Bern.

In 1999, Ralls was the speaker at the 40th anniversary meeting of the Carolina Hosiery Association.

....

Three veterans in the North Carolina Senate will not be seeking re-election to that Chamber this year. Sen. Kay Hagan and Sen. Walter Dalton, co-chairs of the Senate Appropriations Committee, are seeking higher office: Dalton for lieutenant governor and Hagan to replace GOP Sen. Elizabeth Dole. Sen. John Kerr of Wayne County, co-chair of the Senate Finance Committee, is retiring from politics. Other senators who will not return are Janet Cogwell of Wake who is running for state treasurer and Malcolm Graham of Mecklenburg who concluded

family commitments come first.

Two GOP senators also won't return. Fred Smith is campaigning for his party's gubernatorial nomination and Robert Pittenger is in the primary race for lieutenant governor.

Sen. David Hoyle, co-chair of Finance, has announced he will seek election to a sixth term. The Gaston County Democrat had considered retirement as well. He is a close associate of Senate President Marc Basnight.

Rep. Debbie Clary, a popular Cleveland County Republican, has announced she will seek Dalton's seat in the Senate. Clary was co-chair of the House Appropriations Committee when that Chamber had Rep. Richard Morgan and Rep. Jim Black as co-speakers in 2003–05.

....

The Republican gubernatorial primary is putting some legislators on the hot spot, so to speak. Sen. Fred Smith has listed the names of 39 GOP lawmakers who have endorsed his quest. They include Mecklenburg legislators who have been contacted by Charlotte Mayor Pat McCrory who is moving closer to jumping in the race. ■

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New Model, New Thinking,



New Opportunities On The Agenda For Hosiery Center And CEMS

A new model is required for operations and organizations supporting manufacturing in America, concludes Dan St. Louis, director of the Hosiery Technology Center. That paradigm involves the sharing of resources and skills for small and medium-sized producers.

For hosiery manufacturers and their suppliers, the answer is CEMS.

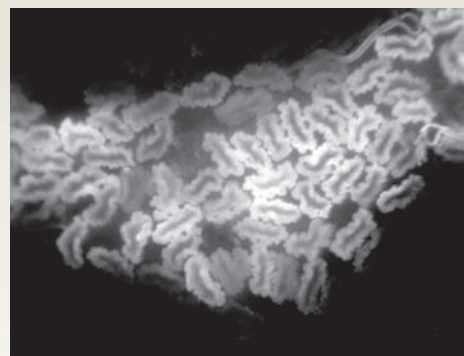
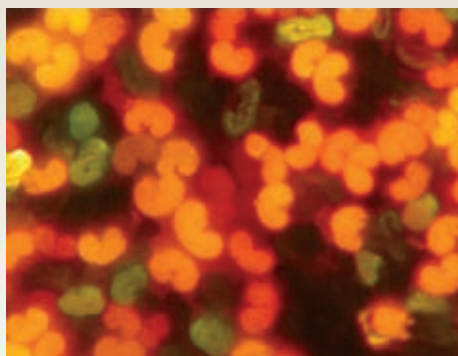
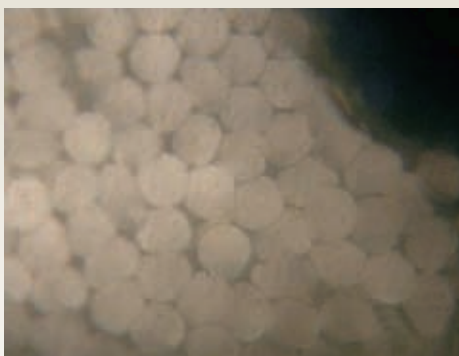
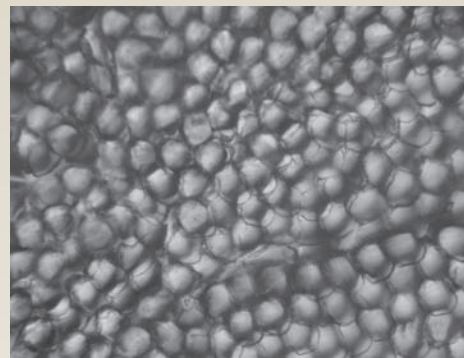
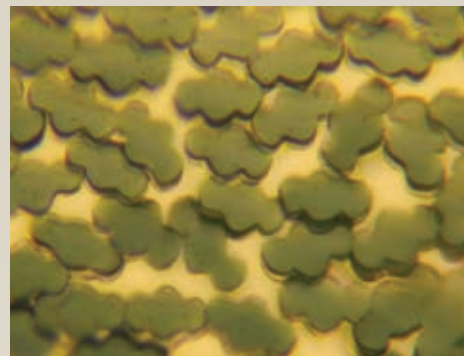
The Center for Emerging Manufacturing Solutions will function with public and private support and expand the services offered to hosiery, yarn, furniture and other so-called traditional industries that are adapting 21st century strategies. It will operate in new facilities under the direction of St. Louis who has headed the hosiery

program since 1990.

St. Louis will continue to oversee the hosiery center's 15-persons staff which is generating \$50,000 a month in revenue from testing, research and development, training and prototyping. With CEMS, the hosiery center will have access to technology shared by other manufacturing segments such as

furniture upholstery and design.

The hosiery center laboratory has experienced significant expansion. Technicians are now testing anti-microbial properties, yarn construction and properties, and characteristics for compression and fit. Retailers, brands and manufacturers can get confirmation that products are exactly what they are



represented to be.

Throughout 2008 and beyond, CEMS will be working with manufacturers in an environment that will be tough—but with a lot of opportunity, St. Louis observes.

“It is not going to be easy,” he acknowledges. “The trend is toward high-tech products with new properties,” he continues. Hosiery center customers also want proof of performance, he adds.

High on the list of opportunities is exports. With the low value of the dollar against other currencies, notably the euro, American-made products are a bargain overseas, St. Louis says. Some manufacturers are taking advantage of the market, but others should be pushing for overseas customers, he insists. Exporting is not easy, it takes a lot of preparations, but it pays off in the long haul, he reports.

The hosiery center’s staff includes Marc Swinnen, a sales and marketing

professional with extensive experience in global sales. In 2007, Swinnen’s work generated more than \$18 million in sales for U.S. producers. “It would have been much more if some of the mills had followed up on leads,” he adds.

A trend that will continue in 2008 is the push from retailers and brand managers for the creation of new products. The HTC staff has been asked by retailers to visit some manufacturers to confirm the quality of the products. “Some of them are paying high money and they want it done right,” St. Louis observes. In 2007, St. Louis estimates that one-third of the center’s activities was driven by retailers, including prototyping and testing.

Retailers also are enrolling buyers and managers in the basis hosiery courses taught by the HTC staff. Hosiery 101 for those new to hosiery production and Hosiery 102 with more advanced information were taught at the HTC

and also at special sessions on-site at retailers and brand companies. Because of the changes and demands for added characteristics in the product, the courses have been expanded to two full days.

“I’m having to adjust the curriculum up until a day before the class just to keep up with changes,” St. Louis asserts.

The center occupies space in the East Campus complex for Catawba Valley Community College in Hickory. It is “maxed out” of room in its current location and soon will be moving into quarters in the Hickory Engineering Technologies building in Hickory. It will continue to function under the N.C. Community Colleges system.

Also in the building will be the entire CEMS program with furniture technology center, and other manufacturing outreach services. That building is managed by Appalachian

(continued on page 8)



New Opportunities.....from page 7

State University, which will determine when the move will take place.

For St. Louis, it cannot come soon enough.


In preparation for the transition, St. Louis has visited the Southeastern Institute for Manufacturing Technologies at Florence, SC. This \$25 million entity features state-of-the-art media presentations and facilities for training people for the sophisticated manufacturing jobs of the future. Visiting that center was an important learning experience, he reflects.

The move also enables the hosiery center to expand its cooperative programs with important partners—Southeastern Apparel Manufacturers (SEAMS), Textile Clothing and

Technology Center (TC²), The Textiles Technology Center at Belmont, and the U.S. and N.C. Departments of Commerce.

Marketing support from SEAMS, help with size and compression testing from TC², and the myriad services from the textile center involving yarn samples, blends and twists of different yarns and small lots for making samples are “a big deal for us,” says St. Louis.

Green manufacturing with natural fibers, opportunities with biotechnology manufacturing, also will be on the plate at CEMS and its hosiery center.

“We’re going to be busy,” St. Louis predicts. 

State Report Sees Manufacturing Shrinking, But Still Viable

by Paul Fogleman,
Trends Publisher

The evidence of the decline of manufacturing jobs in is all around: empty furniture and textile buildings, higher unemployment, and foreclosures. But doomsday is not in the future. Change is.

In North Carolina, manufacturing still accounts for 17 percent of the jobs, the second largest sector, just behind Trade, Transportation and Utilities. Despite the loss of some 182,000 jobs since 2000, manufacturing and its higher payrolls continues to fuel the economies for hundreds of towns and cities.

Insight, the fall bulletin published by the N.C. Employment Security Commission, looks at the transition manufacturing has had to make over the years, providing a glimpse at some of the possibilities that lay ahead. Textiles, apparel, and textile product mills are included in the survey and data that tracks

the path for manufacturing.
In North Carolina, the largest

20 to 99 employees. Those companies that employ over 1,000 people have 15 percent

Overall, the state economy over the next 10 years is expected to generate almost 700,000 new jobs.

percentage of manufacturing workers—some 43 percent or 225,370—are employed at companies with a payroll of 100 to 499. But in numbers, these companies are only 14 percent of the total. More than half of the states manufacturers employ less than 20 people. Some 22 percent of the state's manufacturers have

of the workforce on their payroll while they represent only one-half of 1 percent of the manufacturing companies.

A worker in manufacturing generally makes more money than those employed in other sectors. The average weekly wage for those employed in apparel manufacturing (including hosiery) last year was \$677. The average weekly paycheck for a person employed in textiles was \$614 and those in textile product mills earned \$575.

The highest paid manufacturing personnel were in computer and electronic products company and took home \$1,299 weekly. The lowest paid were food manufacturing employees whose weekly paycheck averaged \$555.

From 2001 to 2006, nearly 1,800 manufacturing companies closed their doors. That trend continued in 2007 with

In North Carolina, the largest percentage of manufacturing workers—some 43 percent or 225,370—are employed at companies with a payroll of 100 to 499.

(continued on page 11)



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PAST PRESENT FUTURE

Textile Technology Center Broadens Focus With Expansion Of Services, Client Base

The new era for the textiles industry will reflect the broader trend toward specialization, says the chief executive for the Textile Technology Center at Belmont, NC.

Just as healthcare has become a realm of specialists, so will manufacturing, including textiles, observes John Anderson who took over the center operations in November 2006. Anderson says his client base will be smaller and medium-sized companies with production operations in the United States. "They are successful because they have focused on a specialty product for narrow market segment," Anderson concludes.

Anderson has assumed leadership of a center in transition that is serving an industry experiencing dramatic change. Both the center and the industry have experienced the difficult—and sometimes painful—process of re-inventing themselves.

It's a process that will never end, considering the ongoing impact of globalization.

The center's business plan for 2008, reviewed and approved by the board of advisors in November 2007, includes a healthy blend of optimism and strategic thinking.

The goals for 2008 mirror Anderson's confidence that cost-conscious leadership in the textiles industry will respond to cost-effective support from the center.

Testing, research and development, personnel training, marketing services, producing samples....these are among the priorities in the year ahead. The growth of the center's activities in 2007 indicated more will be demanded in the current year.

In his report to the board, Anderson noted that billings from the center to textile companies contracting for special services in July 2006 was just under \$4,000. One year later the

center invoiced over \$24,000 for services. In May and June the billings topped \$25,000. Billings for October 2007 came to \$23,106.

As a division of Gaston College, the Textile Technology Center receives a recurring appropriation for operations of \$500,000 a year. Additional state monies have been allocated for capital improvements. The center depends on its earned income to acquire and update equipment that costs hundreds of thousands of

dollars.

With his background in business (he formerly was employed with Wellman), Anderson understands the economies of running an operation. His next priority is to acquire a weaving machine to produce woven fabric samples from small quantities of yarn. Three major components plus support hardware—single end slasher, sample warper, weaving machine—costs \$92,178. The center has run three demonstration trials and billed clients \$1,200 per sample.

Testing, research and development, personnel training, marketing services, producing samples....these are among the priorities in the year ahead.

Anderson says with the acquisition the center would be in a position to generate \$6,000 a month in new revenue. At two fabric projects per week, the net income would run \$2,000 a week for a 12-months payback. At four samples per month, the payback would be two years.

It's that kind of thinking that has his board enthused. "John knows the industry and he knows what it wants and what it will support," says Ed Wilburn of Wellman Inc., a longtime supporter of the center and a member of the board.

Board members also have been motivated by Anderson's pursuit of new accounts. His list of new accounts include a broad swath of manufacturers, mostly small and needing help in developing new business. His list of new fabrics accounts includes companies going after specialty business, but also the who's who of international textile firms: Springs Global, Burlington World Wide, Milliken and Co.

As he moves into his second year as director of the center, Anderson has developed specific goals...measurable...and in his view achievable.

A management goal is to have a textile industry database and the expertise to implement internet marketing communication with clients and prospects along the entire textile product supply chain.

Another goal stated in Anderson's plan is to have 30 new clients, which will generate \$165,000 in gross revenue for the center by 2009.

As a measure of the center's outreach, the plan calls for services to be offered to textile manufacturers in 40 counties across North Carolina during 2008. Those services range from consultation to product evaluation and analysis, sample production, performance testing and technical training.

Anderson says cooperation with the Hosiery Technology Center and N.C. State University—valuable partners—will continue to be central to achieving his goals. ■

2008 Textile Center Goals

- Develop textile industry database and necessary expertise to implement web-based marketing communications with clients and prospects along entire textile product supply chain.
- Develop relationship with 30 new clients in the textiles industry.
- Generate \$165,000 in gross revenue from client services.
- Expand outreach to manufacturers in 40 N.C. counties. (Research and development, product performance testing, technical training, et al.)

State Report

.....from page 9


some important hosiery companies among the casualties: Paul Lavitt Mills, Southern Hosiery Mill, Johnson Hosiery Co. and several other smaller firms. Furniture and computer and electronic firms also were subsectors hit by job losses.

The publication noted that while employment declined, wages paid to the survivors increased over the six years. Apparel paychecks rose by 44 percent, and textiles by 17 to 18 percent.

Looking ahead to 2014, the ESC publication sees manufacturing employing 427,370 persons in North Carolina, slightly down from the 435,000 10 years earlier. A subcategory referred to as "team assemblers" will create a net growth of 24,920 jobs, it is estimated. Machinists, welders, meat packers, and fabricators also will see major growth.

Hosiery and textiles are among those categories predicted to shrink, along with furniture companies. They will still be around, but more mechanized, more efficient and smaller. These companies will not be involved in so-called commodity products.

Overall, the state economy over the next 10 years is expected to generate almost 700,000 new jobs. None of this net growth will come from the manufacturing sector, it is predicted. As with other states across America, jobs growth will come with educational and health services, leisure and hospitality, construction and trade (retail) transportation and utilities. Government also will be a growth sector.

In the meantime, the North Carolina's population at the end of 2007 was estimated at over 9 million, with an annual growth rate of over 2 percent. South Carolina in 2007 added more than 50,000 to push its population to over 4.5 million. 



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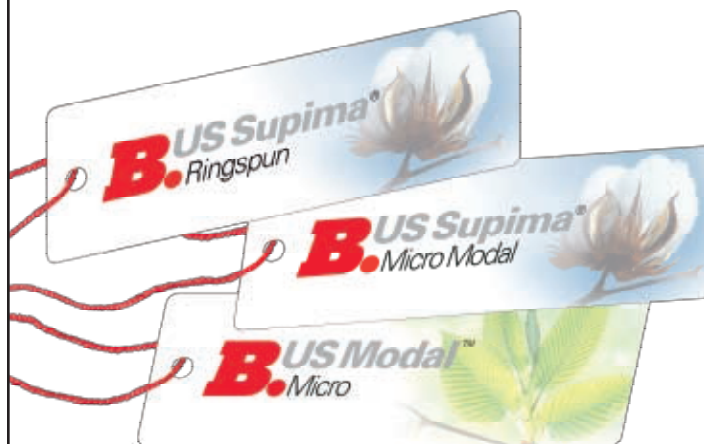
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Synthetic Fiber Manufacturers Meeting All About Going Green

American synthetic yarn and fiber producers will pursue a “green” meeting agenda when they convene in Charlotte February 12-13.

The theme for the winter conference, sponsored by the Synthetic Yarn and Fiber Association and the Fiber Surface Group, is “Sustainable is Attainable: Redesigning the Textile Industry.” Translation: man-made fibers can be part of the earth-friendly movement.

The conference at the Sheraton Airport Plaza in Charlotte is expected to attract some 400 executives from the Carolinas and other regions where hosiery, textiles and apparel manufacturing exists. High-profile speakers on the conference agenda represent some of America’s most successful companies.

The keynote speaker is Ray Anderson of Interface Inc. who insists his journey began with a drive to fulfill Interface’s environmental target of “Mission Zero” to reduce its carbon footprint. Anderson’s journey forever changed his vision for the company and the petroleum-intensive industry of carpet manufacturing. He wrote a book of his transition, “Mid-Course Correction,” and became an unlikely hero in a 2004 Canadian film documentary “The Corporation.”

Other presenters during the conference include Alasdair Carmichael on Sustainability of Synthetic Fiber: A Global



Review; John Warner, green chemical applications for textiles; and a representative from Wal-Mart on “Always the Sustainable Choice, Always.”

Randy Harward of Patagonia has titled his presentation: “Fabric for Life: Patagonia’s Sustainable Initiatives.” Other speakers are from Ford Motor Co., Dow Jones, Steelcase, and Designtex. ■

Online Sites For Socks Aboard; But Not For Bargain-Hunters

Type in socks for sale on the internet search engine and up comes 919,000 websites.

The online shopping phenomenon has hit the socks industry big time. Same is true with women’s sheer hosiery.

But it is not a trip for bargain-hunters. One site, CheapSocks.com, touted athletic

socks at \$19.95 a pair, supposedly down from \$39 a pair. Numerous are offerings in the \$9.95 range.

Among the thousands of sites are socks4life.com, socksforsale.com, socks4sale.com., absolutesocks.com, and on and on. Altrec.com featured smart wool women’s socks for \$14.99 a pair.

Earth-friendly or green, the socks sites abound. Internatural-alternative-health site features tie dye socks starting at \$8.50 a pair. Greensocks.com has a sale for six pairs of Mezlan socks for \$83.45—down 48 percent from the original \$161.

For \$32.99, you can order one pair of socks made for the German Federal Armed Forces...80 percent wool.

Major department stores, including Macy’s and Bloomingdale’s, have websites just for hosiery and socks.

So do major designers including Liz Claiborne and Ralph Lauren. Numerous retail specialty stores, among them Eddie Bauer, have sites for socks. Fox River, ThorLo, Burlington, Gold Toe are among the brands touted by several sites.

Browsing the sites you learn that socks are not just for the feet. One features socks for iPods. Another has windsocks—novelty for garden or porches.

Several years ago, the Hosiery Technology Center was developing prototypes for knitted “socks” to cover rifles, fishing gear, and skis. One North Carolina company has even made knitted covers for wine bottles on a socks knitting machine.

Novelty and specialty items fit well into the product mix for smaller manufacturers. The margins are higher and the risks are lower. And they can make a big difference on the bottom line. ■



Online Shopping Leaps

Online shopping during the holiday season topped \$29 billion, according to the National Retail Federation.

Over \$900 million in sales were transacted in a single day—on December 11, the NRF reported.

Overall, holiday sales were up less than 2 percent from the previous season. This represented the slowest growth in five years, retailers reported. 

Goldtoe Moretz Closing Operations in Burlington to Go Offshore

Goldtoe Moretz has announced it will close all manufacturing operations in Burlington, NC, meaning that over 400 people will lose their jobs.

The first phase of the shutdown will begin in mid-March, according to Bill Sheely, vice president of operations. The shutdown will be completed by mid-June, he said.

Sheely said that socks will be sourced from operations in South America and Asia. He said while Goldtoe Moretz regretted the hardships resulting from the decision, the longterm health of the company had to be considered.

The globalization of the marketplace has made it possible for manufacturers catering to mass merchants to source goods outside the United States more economically feasible. In November Johnson Hosiery Mills of Hickory closed after 70 years of operation, explaining it could not compete with low cost offshore products.

Prior to the merger, Moretz Inc. employed more than 500 persons in its Catawba County manufacturing facilities. GoldToe, formerly Great American Knitting Mills, employed 1,200 10 years ago. 



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Legwear Fashions Textiles

2008 Editorial Calendar

FEBRUARY

OFF-SHORE PRODUCTION TRENDS: Some domestic companies are moving some operations to Honduras and other points south. Others are finding U.S. labor more competitive, fueled by incentives from state government. How is the role of distribution centers playing with veteran companies. How is the role of suppliers changing?

MARCH

RETAILING IN COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT:

Department stores, specialty chains, niche retailers and mass marketers are changing. How are merchandising strategies affecting hosiery and textiles companies? Is “made in the U.S.A” a label that has a niche? Role of the technology centers in developing U.S. markets reviewed.

MAY

FALL PREVIEW: Overview of trends that affect hosiery products in the fashion arena—as an accessory item and as a lifestyle component. Innovative yarn structure, colors, packaging and merchandising trends included in advertising and editorial coverage.

JULY

TEXTILES AND HUMAN RESOURCES: Developing and keeping an efficient workforce still remains a problem for the industry. Downsizing and closings in the past have hurt recruiting efforts and some companies report the problem is critical. What lies on the horizon and services that can help human resource programs are covered.

SEPTEMBER

INDUSTRY CLUSTERS: North Carolina and the Fort Payne, Alabama area are examples of industry clusters. Hosiery manufacturing spawned companies that supply them. The same is the case with textile operations. These clusters have given manufacturers a competitive advantage. But are those clusters still working as a support mechanism? Where are the missing links in the 21st century economy?

NOVEMBER

TECHNOLOGY CENTERS AND THEIR MISSION:

The technology centers in Hickory, Asheboro and Belmont, North Carolina, have adjusted to the changing needs of their clients—the manufacturers. Research and development and prototyping of new products remain priorities, along with market support. Roles also have encompassed other industries that interface with textiles and hosiery.

APRIL

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS: The U.S. Department of Commerce and the North Carolina General Assembly have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in the future of the hosiery and textile industries through their technology centers. It is budget time again and the future of thousands of jobs are at stake. Momentum gains for one of the most important elections in our history. Outlook for hosiery and textile industry initiatives reviewed as Washington and Raleigh lawmakers return to develop budgets.

JUNE

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: Addressing change has been the challenge for U.S. hosiery manufacturers over the past decade. Since the late 1990s, mergers and closings have made headlines. But also there is news about start-ups and companies that have re-positioned themselves as distributors and niche players. Trends pointing to the future of domestic suppliers will include such issues as diversification, lean manufacturing and marketing.

AUGUST

NEXT RENAISSANCE: In the 1970s and 1980s the industry experienced a new awakening, led by young executives entering the family business. They helped the industry become brand marketers and establish new strategies for reaching out to retailers. Is a new generation of executives ready to carry companies to new markets, global and within the U.S.? Profiles of new leaders.

OCTOBER

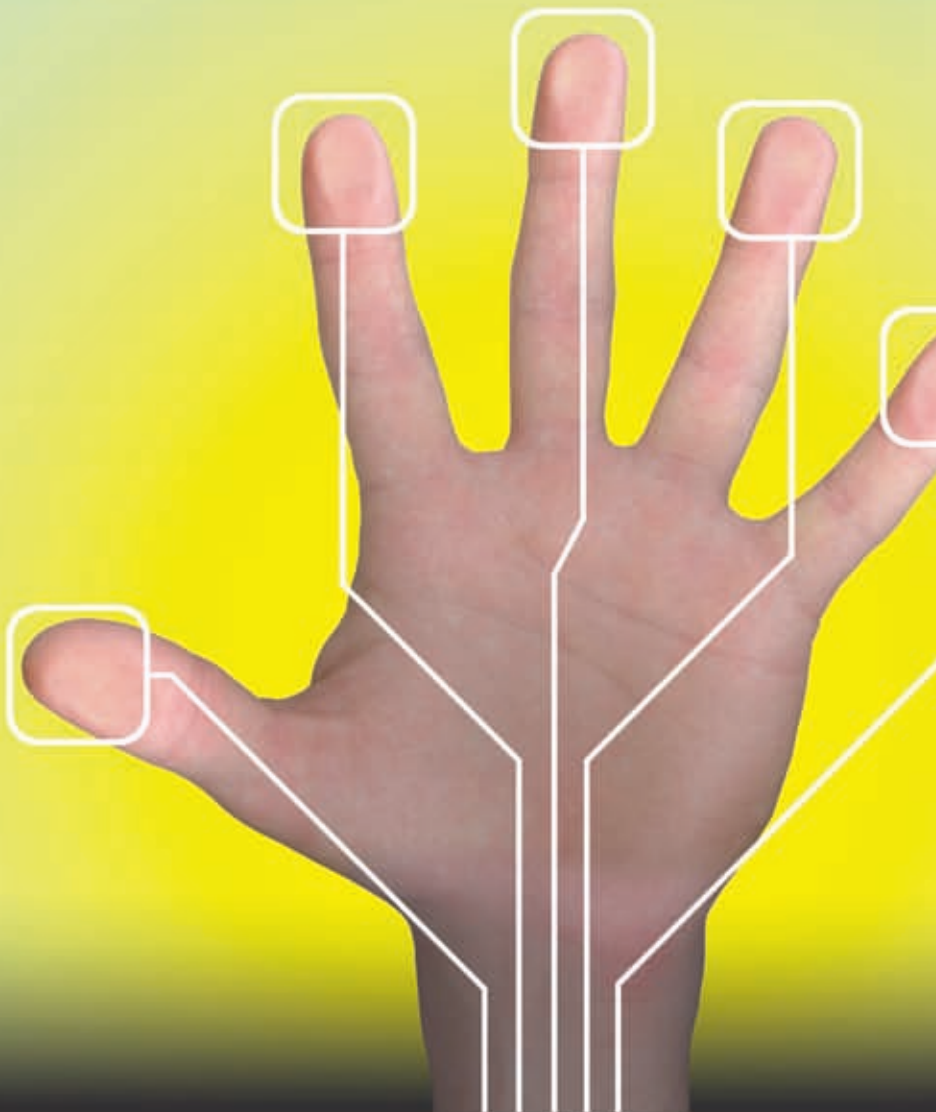
RETAILING: Is it true that Chinese consumers want products with a made-in-the-USA label? Are global retailers a market for U.S. manufacturers? How much business is going to online marketers? What is solidifying relations with U.S. retailers? Brands? Features and news stories cover trends. Holiday shipments are included.

DECEMBER

NEW LEADERSHIP: The 2008 elections have brought changes to U.S. government and the halls in state legislatures. We will profile some of the new faces and offer some insight into the issues they will embrace that could affect manufacturers. Universal health insurance could be one. More doors open for organized labor could be another.

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