



LONDON MANUFACTURERS

UKFT | London Manufacturers Manifesto

This Manifesto defines the purpose and aims of *UKFT | London Manufacturers* and its reasons for forming.

Introduction

London holds a high concentration of fashion manufacturers in a small geographical area. These businesses deliver high quality services to the fashion industry from the high end to the high street, they have abilities across product and are located in close proximity to the majority of the brands and designers in the UK.

This group of businesses is currently unrepresented and suffer from a series of common issues that both threaten their stability and inhibit their growth. These businesses are typically micro SME in size and with an increased and growing demand for the ability to manufacture in the UK there is a need to support their growth potential.

UKFT have identified that there is a need for these businesses to join together to collectively address these inhibitors. Doing so will not only allow these businesses to keep up with the demand that is required from the rest of the industry but also create employment in typically disadvantaged areas, contribute to the London and UK economy and potentially create a new ability for the UK to export.

There has been resounding support from the manufacturing industry in London who have asked UKFT to work with them to create a network for London fashion manufacturers. Of the 150 manufacturers initially identified, 46 businesses have been engaged and a founding group of 15 manufacturers came together with UKFT to draft a manifesto for UKFT | London Manufacturers.

Purpose

UKFT has established a new network called UKFT | London Manufacturers to unite and bring strength to a previously unrepresented group of businesses.

Membership of UKFT | London Manufacturers will include businesses who supply sampling, prototyping and production capabilities in London to the fashion and textiles industry across apparel, knitwear and leather.

The aim of UKFT | London Manufacturers is to collectively renew the visibility of this group, achieve one voice with which to address a set of common issues and instigate a series of suitable interventions.

Supported by UKFT the network will be a commercial and therefore sustainable platform for its membership. It will act as a facilitator, a network and a contact point for communication to and from the membership.

Common Themes

The businesses who have engaged have reported a clear set of common themes that affect them. These factors both inhibit their growth and threaten their survival and fall under the following headers:

- Visibility
- People
- Customer
- Community
- Premises
- Equipment

Visibility

The range of latent abilities of London based fashion manufacturing, and it's quality, needs to be more visible and more accessible.

London fashion manufacturing needs representation to compete with increasingly sophisticated European capabilities and to sell to new markets.

The image of the London fashion manufacturing sector needs raising - any group representation must demand and protect high levels of quality and compliance and will create an aspirational level of operation for those who wish to be a part of it.

People

There is a critical shortage of technically skilled people in London and the UK across manufacturing roles.

Investment in premises and equipment, to allow this part of the sector to grow, will mean the need grow the workforce.

There is a need to address methods of recruitment and training to allow for a growth in the workforce.

There is a need to address the retention and protection of the existing skilled workforce.**

**with increased significance pending the exit from the European Union

Customer

In order for London fashion manufacturers to invest in and grow their businesses they need to be assured of a consistent source and flow of work. Working with the right customer and gaining their loyalty is important.

Many new and established brands suffer from poor cashflow, often due to poor payment terms from their own customers. This can end up affecting the cashflow of the manufacturer or their ability to work with these customers.

Many new and established brands also suffer from a low level of technical experience or understanding of how to effectively work with manufacturers. Often, they end up taking a mentoring role with these businesses with a hope that they will become stronger longterm customers.

Often, at the point when brands reach a certain size or receive new investment they decide to take their manufacturing to Europe or the Far East. London fashion manufacturing needs to be able to accommodate and retain these businesses as they themselves grow.

There is a need to consider a broader customer base and/or educate those in or joining the the fashion supply chain.

Community

This group of currently unrepresented businesses have no forum by which to communicate and discuss the issues that affect them. Very few have seen other manufacturing environments in London and currently do not collaborate in any way.

There is a need to create a strong collective voice with which to get the needs of these businesses heard - be that to local or national government, to education or to the rest of the industry.

There is a need to facilitate networking to allow London fashion manufacturers to share best practice, identify joint solutions to problems and collaborate if desired.

There is a need to set a high quality and compliance standard for all manufacturers in London through the aspiration to be part of, and through the support of, a community.

Premises

London fashion manufacturers are being badly affected by the fast and drastically rising rents across London. The location of the majority of this sector are in areas that are being worst affected in North and East London.

It is crucial to many to stay close enough to where they are currently located in order to be close to where their skilled staff live - they are not likely to travel far or relocate for this kind of work. This also makes accessing business development areas difficult.

Landlords and developers are increasingly favouring domestic usage to commercial. This is creating an environment where it is hard for businesses to find affordable, suitable premises nearby to allow for expansion.

Within this environment of high rents small manufacturing businesses are also finding business rates, energy and other overheads hard to manage .

Many employers choose to pay the London living wage to help their staff to continue to live in one of the most expensive cities in Europe. This also significantly increases the running costs of the business.

London holds an impressive range and quality of manufacturing services across products, but with these businesses facing some of the highest operational costs in Europe, it is hard for them to compete on price point with European counterparts.

Equipment

The decision to invest in equipment in order to expand capacity is dependant on many of the above factors.

Businesses need to feel confident in receiving consistent orders from their customers before investing in new equipment to accommodate them.

The inability to find appropriate space can restrict some from expanding - particularly in the case of large equipment such as a cutting table.

Investment in certain types of equipment, such as a cutting table may mean a significant increase in workflow so would require larger investment in other facilities to match this - for example more machinists.

Alongside an investment in equipment comes the need to train either new or existing staff.

There is currently very little, suitable financial support available for investment in physical equipment or training staff to operate it. There are specific suitable funds in other parts of the country for the industry but not currently in London.

These inhibitors also make it difficult for London fashion manufacturers to invest in new technologies or innovation. Other European countries are far further ahead in these fields.

Due to the small size of the manufacturing businesses based in London it is almost impossible to invest in specialist equipment on their own.

There is a range of business type, model and size within the London fashion manufacturing sector so each business experiences the impact of these in different ways. As a group though, each theme can be addresses more effectively to benefit the group and the industry as a whole.

Interventions

UKFT | London Manufacturers aims to be a vehicle with which to collectively address the issues faced by this group. The mandate to develop a series of suitable interventions has come from the businesses that will form the membership of the network.

UKFT | London Manufacturers intends to act from the 'bottom up' driven by the needs and voice of the network to ensure it is relevant and effective for the membership.

UKFT | London Manufacturers will need to operate commercially in order to give it sustainability and long term momentum. Public funding may be accessed in order to execute a number of the interventions but will not be relied upon to sustain the core running of the network.

The interventions that the network could achieve will come in a number of forms - they may be monetary, they may be through collaboration, they may utilise existing schemes, they may be learning and sharing based, they may involve research or they may be achieved through the collective voice or lobbying.

A number of interventions will automatically occur as a result of coming together as an association. Some will be relatively easy to achieve and relatively short term; the rest will be longer term ambitions that the association agree to aim towards.

The three main focuses will be *Representation, Investment* and *Education*.

Support for UKFT | London Manufacturers

An initial group of 15 manufacturers came together with UKFT to draft this Manifesto. The following testimonials illustrate a range of support for the network:

'UKFT is delighted to have funded this research and to have helped bring these businesses together. The London manufacturing sector is vibrant and full of potential. We very much look forward to helping the formation and development of UKFT | London Manufacturers'

Adam Mansell - CEO, UKFT

Blackhorse Lane Ateliers manufacture superior quality Denim in North London. Toby is a Menswear MA graduate of the Royal College of Art, Welsh Designer of The Year and design consultant to Margaret Howell for 12 years, leading to 3 nominations for - British Menswear Designer Of The Year - by the British Fashion Council.

"One of the significant problems London garment manufacturers have faced is the misconceived perception their work is inferior or not sophisticated enough to compete internationally. The irony being their true challenge has not been achieving quality but on educating the consumers and retailers to understand the benefits to the local economy and planet, if they buy locally-made long lasting products, rather than throw away imported goods, that originate from cheap labour and are made thousands of miles away.

London has an international reputation for its design expertise but has lost sight of the importance of promoting quality goods manufactured in London. Design and manufacture go hand in hand and behind every great designer is an equally great factory. A capital city needs capital to help secure the future of its manufacturing hubs.

To change the cultural landscape in London requires proactive do'ers to collectively work together and achieve these important gains. This requires visibility and a single voice to raise awareness, establishing a London manufacturer's association will be a crucial step towards safeguarding the future of London's manufacturing industry."

Toby Clark - Founder of Blackhorse Lane Ateliers, UKFT | London Manufacturers member

Albion Knitting Co. established their factory in North London in April 2014. They are the first industrial scale fully fashioned flat knitter in London in eighty years. They offer luxury brands both sampling and production and selected their location to allow ease of access to their key clients.

"Here at The Albion Knitting Company we firmly believe in the formation of an association to represent and actively promote the interests of London based fashion manufacturers. Despite the fact there are over 150 fashion manufacturing enterprises in London, the fundamental role these businesses play in creating the fashion that has made London a fashion capital of the world has been overlooked.

Government and European funding, focused on regional development strategy, has unfairly neglected manufacturers in the capital despite the fact we employ and train young apprentices and graduates and are in desperate need of support for training, re-tooling and workspace for growth.

Since 2014 despite investing two million pounds in manufacturing in London, employing 26 full time staff and six apprentices and university placement students, Albion has received no grants or support from the government or European organisations.

Albion is the first investment in industrial scale, fully fashioned, flat knitting in England for 80 years and the homegrown skills that once drove the English knitting industry have all but disappeared. Albion wants to drive a renaissance in the knitting industry in capital and to do this we need the support of a strong association and recognition at government level that we have invested in people and infrastructure and deserve financial support to further the expansion of fashion manufacturing in London."

Chris Murphy - Director of Albion Knitting Co., UKFT | London Manufacturers member

"London's creative industries generate £36b per annum and account for 1 in 6 jobs. The fashion sector, with its diverse range of business activities plays a crucial role in this success. London is one of the top fashion capitals alongside Paris, New York and Milan. However, the fact that London has over 150 manufacturers but there is little awareness of these businesses is a major gap in our evidence base.

The formation of a London fashion manufacturing association to bring together a disparate group of businesses to share knowledge and address challenges as a group would support the development of policy and programmes that promote London's position as a world fashion capital. The GLA is currently investigating the potential of a fashion hub in East London and an association like this could provide insights to secure funding for growth; innovation and skills; provide business support while simultaneously acting as representatives for the needs of this part of the industry."

Amanda Decker, Cultural Policy Officer – Creative Talent, Greater London Authority

Ex Head of Production and Sourcing at Roland Mouret, 25 years of industry experience, a keen supporter of 'Made in the UK' and a visiting lecturer at London's top fashion universities. Daliah sits on a number of industry boards and panels addressing skills and investment within UK manufacturing including Creative Skillset's UK Skills Council and the Lord Alliance Regional Growth Fund Board.

"London manufacturers are capable of the highest level of Luxury RTW and High Street Manufacturing and have the highest concentration of Luxury RTW manufacturers in the country. As a capital city we do not qualify to access regional growth funding to invest in our manufacturing from a skills, premises and technical perspective, as well as promotion and representation. Manufacturers based in different regions of the country such as Manchester and Huddersfield have 'Manufacturers Associations' acting as one voice for the greater good of all members. London is a disparate city and we need to action a Manufacturer's association to address these challenges by acting as one voice to access funding for growth, innovation, skills and business support. Without this we cannot guarantee the sustainability of London manufacturers nor the availability for design graduates to develop their businesses.

Collaboration between Design and manufacture is the key to success. We need to tell the story of London manufacturers and brand our production 'Made in London'; known for our Design and manufacturing capabilities. An association is the first step in achieving this."

Daliah Simble, Product Life Cycle and Supply Chain Management Consultant.

Gosha London is a Sample and Cut Make Trim unit based in West London with a staff of around 10 people. For 21 years they have been servicing High End designers such as Roksander Ilincic, Amanda Wakley and Emilia Wickstead.

"The creation of an association of 'high end luxury fashion manufacturers' will be of great value, allowing manufacturers to share ideas, raise their profile, win business for the UK economy, nurture future talent, and gain collective security.

When I first started, I dreamt of creating garments of the highest quality for high-end luxury womenswear, and I believe we are achieving that and more. We are constantly looking to improve and strive for perfection, and I believe that the finishes and techniques we use to make garments are amongst the best in the country. Now I want to share that with other manufacturers, who could likewise pass on the best of their ideas to other members of the association so that we can all improve together.

Creating an association would also help manufacturers gain representation and a higher profile. Most of the UK's high-end designers are based in London, and yet there is little or no funding available for micro businesses such as ours with growing overheads and the need for training. Support is needed and collectively we can address that. As manufacturers we have no representation; the fashion industry is focused overwhelmingly on the designers and fashion shows, rather than on the manufacturing which makes the shows possible.

We need to support the incredible potential of design and manufacturing talent we currently have in London, and encourage young people to come into manufacturing rather than the design side, which currently attracts much of the best talent. Working with different designs every week is very exciting, and to see the finished products being worn by celebrities or royalty is a big high! We need to pass on the vision of fashion manufacturing as a sexy profession, so the creation of an association to provide collective exposure to the industry will be extremely important for ensuring that we continue to produce truly outstanding and notable professionals in future.

Around 15 years ago designers were dropping manufacturers in great numbers and taking their work to India, China and Europe in pursuit of cheaper production costs. A lot of this was arguably short-term greed rather than sound business thinking, but the outcome was that manufacturers in London were badly hit and many closed down. Designers are now returning to the UK in good numbers and want their designs made here, but they remain concerned about the costs.

I support this association so that it can allow fashion manufacturers to support each other and grow stronger together. As an association, we can ensure that the best products in the world are made here in glorious Britain and the fashion capital of the world, we can help each other create achievements to be proud of, and we can make the world envious of our success."

Mustafa Fuat, Owner of Gosha London, UKFT | London Manufacturers member

The Apparel Company team has worked together in Hackney for over 15 years producing for specialist mail order companies, department stores, young designers and lifestyle brands.

"Internationally the UK is one of the leading lights in Fashion.

Designers and lifestyle brands are renowned across the world and more specifically in all the key international markets. Made in Britain, Made in England and Heritage products are in demand and respected.

This reputation is further enhanced by the depth of outstanding and creative, new and young Designers that we produce season after season... and London is the heart that supports this talent.

The issues that face suppliers are numerous and differ dramatically from company to company and without doubt a collective voice and organisation would help to address and support those issues.

We should be proud of what we have in London but the manufacturers should not be left alone to deal with the continuing obstacles and issues placed in their paths.

The industry as a whole should be helping and supporting the manufacturers who (by employment) maintain many of the skills, artistry and creativity that would otherwise be lost."

Russell Shine, Owner of The Apparel Co., UKFT | London Manufacturers member

Threads London is a high quality CMT unit in North London making for fashion, corporate and costume.

"An association of manufacturers would bring the best London manufacturers together and showcase the services and skills on our doorstep. We can work together to promote good practice and high quality and distinguish ourselves from the sweatshop image that surrounds London manufacturing.

In unity we can support the growth of the British fashion industry, create jobs and advance ourselves in technology and skills. Through an association the world can see the best of London manufacturing."

Sital Punja, Director of Threads London Ltd., UKFT | London Manufacturers member

*Be part of helping London manufacturing to thrive.
For more information and to join contact:*

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