

# Fabric and yarn

*“I placed my fabric order with a mill over 60 days ago and got a confirmed delivery date from them and it’s now seven days after the delivery date and the mill is telling me that it’s going to be another seven days... my manufacturer has already given my production space to another designer as they can’t hold space for me any longer.”*

**Designer**



Many high-end designers source their fabrics from specialist mills in Italy, but late deliveries from Italy are a very common experience. This has a knock-on effect on the whole production process and in many cases there is pressure from the manufacturer when it is not technically the designer’s fault. Designers need to be aware of working practices in Italy; when mills are closed, when there are public holidays, and so on, as this can have an impact on when orders can be shipped. Mills will tend to prioritise larger orders from international companies, so small orders can then be affected. Knitwear producers have similar experiences as designers often source their yarn from Italy.

Digitally printed fabrics bring with them particular problems. Designers are finding that the first batch is often a write-off as the colours are incorrect. White marks on the fabric and off-register printing are also problems, rendering a fabric unusable. The fabric then has to be reordered, which costs both manufacturer and designer money and time.

Fabric choice needs careful consideration as a fabric that is very delicate or requires a lot of manipulation (i.e. block fusing or sewing with tissue) can make production slow or raise unexpected problems. Manufacturers often misjudge the time it takes to work with more delicate types of fabric such as silk or fine jersey when they are not used to working with it. Designers need to be wary of placing fabrics with units who have little experience or the suitable machinery for producing particular fabrics, but this can be avoided by visiting the factory before placing the order.

Fabrics often arrive direct to manufacturing units where the designer then relies on the manufacturer to check the fabric quality and colour. This can be a problem as designers and manufacturers may have very different tolerances for fabric quality. Designers sometimes return to find that the whole docket has been made in a fabric that is faulty or the incorrect colour. It is useful for designers to provide swatches of what the production fabric should look like, as well as confirmation of the colour that has been approved. It is also imperative that the designer or production manager visits the unit over this time to approve production fabrics, unless they strongly trust the judgement of their manufacturer.

Production mistakes can also occur when designers fail to take into consideration the behaviour of a fabric when pressed and steamed in the final finishing process. Few manufacturers are given measurement specifications for production, meaning that if there was fabric shrinkage, there is no way of checking the correct size of garments. A simple spec sheet could help prevent this.

Top Solutions:

- Better planning of lead times to take fabric delivery into consideration.
- Agreed fabric Quality Control procedures between designer and manufacturer.

Relevant sections from the Fashion Toolkit:

- Production Management.
- Quality Control.



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An Alliance of five key partners working together to support the UK's high-end designer manufacturing sector