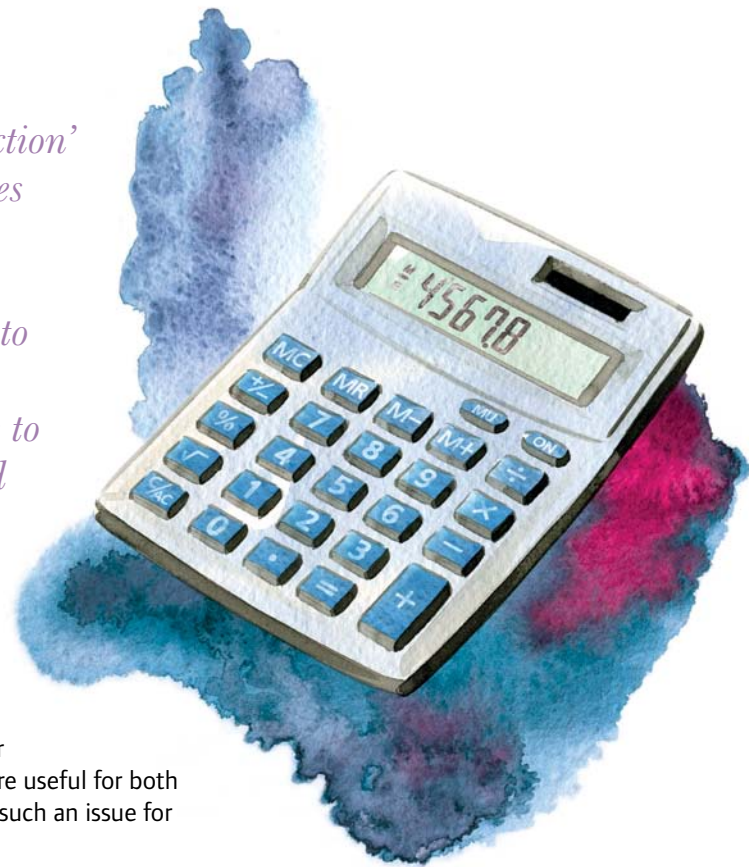


Production volumes and costings

“I have designers sending me their ‘production’ orders which can be as little as 10-12 pieces across five sizes – I have to cut all these individually and the machinists only ever make a couple each so they never get used to the style. They take just as long to make as the sample but the designers still expect me to give them a lower price for production and get upset when I tell them I can’t.”

Manufacturer



Manufacturers and designers have very different ideas about ideal order sizes. Most manufacturers would like to be making orders of 50+ pieces, but in reality designers often order much smaller numbers (often fewer than 20 pieces). It’s therefore useful for both manufacturers and designers to understand why order sizes are such an issue for each party.

Generally, manufacturers calculate garment costings on the time spent producing the sample. Production costings are based on this calculation, adjusted on a sliding scale according to volumes (higher volumes, lower cost per garment). But many smaller designer businesses only ever have small orders, so never qualify for the lower production rates, and exclusivity of the product is part of the appeal of high-end clothing. Manufacturers aren’t always aware of the market position of young designers: they are placing small orders because they are just starting out, not because they are giving large orders to overseas manufacturers.

Conversely, it’s helpful for designers to look carefully at their order numbers, and to get these to work with the costing system used by manufacturers. For instance, it could be worth making a few extra garments if that volume would mean they qualify for lower production costs. They also need to be aware that many manufacturers are already forced to produce a wide range of docket sizes and juggle small orders with larger ones just to keep the workflow constant through the unit.

Designers with more industry experience are often able to give a guide price. In some instances, manufacturers will work to that price, adapting the make of the garment accordingly. Established designers are also more likely to repeat styles (for instance, in a new colourway), which means that both designer and manufacturer know what the costs are likely to be for a given style.

Top Solutions:

- Better understanding between designers and manufacturers of their business size, commercial pressures etc.
- Clear price list presented to designer at start of sampling process which outlines production costs on sliding scale.
- Better analysis by designers of styles in their range plans so that they can capitalise on sales on certain styles to achieve higher order numbers.
- Reduction in sizing spread.
- Designers could hold 'friends and family' sales (often known as Private Order events), at reasonable rates, of their collections to boost order numbers.

Additional information can be found in:

- Resource Guide.



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