



Nester Hosiery Widens Sustainability Footprint

NC Sock Maker Finds More Business, Profit By Using Less

“If it’s an outdoor activity, we make a sock for it,” says Dave Petri, director of sustainability for Mount Airy-based Nester Hosiery, Inc. He gestures to a display of his company’s wares, over 5,000 SKUs of socks for outdoor activities like hunting, hiking, skiing, running, cycling, and specialty footwear for military and police forces, supporting companies like Woolrich, Rocky Boot, and their new brand, Farm to Feet™, a U.S. sourced and manufactured wool product.

Many of Nester’s customers, whose brand identities revolved around outdoor life, have begun looking to their supply chain for further leadership in sustainability. To meet the demand, Nester’s leadership decided to establish an environmental management system, and looked to IES for assistance.

“It made the most sense to use a resource (IES) that has a specific mission to support and grow manufacturing and business in the state,” says Petri. “I think, overall, the experience was phenomenal.”

Giving Waste the Boot

Since its implementation, the EMS has allowed Nester to better focus on issues such as solid waste, energy, and wastewater management. The company boasts a landfill diversion rate of more than 80 percent, a figure that has steadily climbed over the past few years. It has also invested in energy reduction technologies like improved compressed air systems and steam tumblers. When comparing current data against 2009 baseline data, Petri found that although the company’s production levels have increased, it has realized a steady decline in generated waste, consumed water, and energy per dozen socks produced. In sum, the company has reported \$50,000 in cost savings and a total economic impact of over half a million dollars to date.

Nester Hosiery Challenge

Manufacturers increasingly demand that suppliers prove sustainability

IES Solution

Establish an Environmental Management System

Benefits

\$50,000 in cost savings and a total economic impact of over half a million dollars

Showing Customers the Green

Nester has also witnessed increased customer opportunities due to its commitment to sustainability.

“Customers see us as a company who is the full package. We’re everything they’re concerned about in one place,” says Petri.

And, by becoming more involved in promoting sustainability in the outdoor and apparel industry, Petri has been able to collaborate with customers and fellow suppliers through groups like the Outdoor Industry Association and the Sustainable Apparel Coalition.

Petri intends to continue moving the company in the direction of zero waste to landfill, and ever-lower water and energy impacts.

“Sustainability is a journey,” says Petri.

“We want to grow, be profitable, increase sales, and prosper in perpetuity. It takes knowing how to

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— Dave Petri, Director of Sustainability
Nester Hosierey

balance those goals while minimizing impact to the environment that allows you to become more efficient with available resources and continue to grow... Companies that don’t do that are companies that I think won’t exist in the future.”

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