

Made In America 2.0  
Jacob Harrison Long, American Woolen Company  
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Summary by Allison Elston

The textile industry was the first billion-dollar industry in America and grew very rapidly with the industrialization of the production process. The industry reached a pinnacle in the 1950s when ninety seven percent of the fabric worn in the United States was produced in the United States. In the late 1980s, large American retail companies began searching for cheaper labor outside of the United States to draw in customers with products at lower prices. In 2010 only two and a half percent of the apparel sold in America was produced in America and the number of wool mills decreased from three hundred and twenty six to four. Despite the recent dismal numbers in the American textile industry, Jacob Harrison Long of the American Woolen Company believes that change is on the way.

Long sees that the newest consumers in the market have an appreciation for American craft over industrialized products and value a product made in America over products made in other countries. He calls this shift in consumer values “made in America 2.0.” For this shift to be made, Jacob Harrison Long believes that three strategies must change for companies to prosper by being made in America. First, the manufacturing process needs to be more flexible and focus more on mass customization than mass production. Secondly, their marketing strategies must have their product, price, promotion, and place support being made in America. Finally, all parts of the supply chain must start to move back to America. Long has begun to implement all of these strategies in his company, the American Woolen Company.

American Woolen Company is a high-end mill in Connecticut with a long history in textile production. It is the only mill in America that produces fine, worsted wool and luxurious linen blends. They began producing fabric that had more of a European feel but soon discovered that there was a need for fabric with more of a New England feel in weight, construction and color palette. To go along with the shift in producing a more American fabric, Long implemented the three strategy changes that he believes will make the company truly made in America. He made the manufacturing process more flexible by allowing his customers to come in to the factories to give ideas to all of the company’s workers as well as increasing the amount of product development and using lean practices. The marketing strategy of the product changed with the shift to creating fabrics with a New England feel. The price of the product is made similar to European products and the promotion of the product focuses on teaching consumers on why it is important for the product to be made in America. Having the fabrics be made in old mill buildings is very important to the company as it gives the product a very strong feeling of being made in America. For the supply chain, the company has plans to manufacture garments in New York to be sold in America, but they are having trouble moving the other end of the supply chain to the United States. Currently the company purchases their wool from Australia and South Africa because American wool that is too coarse for the company’s use. Overall, the American Woolen Company has molded in to Jacob Harrison Long’s idea of made in America 2.0. The company is using their strong ties to American textile history and the interest of a new consumer to prove that America can have a prosperous textile industry again.