

Apparel Materials at Puma
Jen Penswick, Puma, Boston

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Summary by Victoria Lewandowski

Puma is a global company known and loved by millions. The company is owned by the Kering Group, who also owns brands like Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent, Stella McCartney, and Alexander McQueen. Global headquarters are in Herzogenaurach, Germany with a global performance and marketing hub in Boston, Massachusetts, a sourcing hub in Hong Kong, and sourcing offices in Mexico, El Salvador, Turkey, Vietnam, and Bangladesh. Globally, Puma has 10,000 employees with 1,000 being in Germany, 300 in Hong Kong, and 250 in Boston. Sales in 2016 totaled \$3.7 billion. These sales would not be possible without innovation teams that first create the product and perfect it before it reaches the market. URI graduate Jen Penswick, head of apparel materials at Puma's global performance and marketing hub in Boston, explained the process of materials and product innovation and the events and processes that are involved along the way.

Before starting the innovation process, Puma employees attend trade shows, which gives both them and the industry as a whole an idea of what competitors are doing and what is out there on the market. Some trade shows Puma employees partake in include Outdoor Retailer, ISPO, TexWorld, Premiere Vision, MAGIC, Surf Expo, and the PGA Show. Penswick and her team also travel to Asia frequently to check up on their garment factories, fabric mills, yarn suppliers, fiber suppliers, chemical finish suppliers, and print houses. When it comes time to begin the design process, Puma designers have the chance to attend "Design Camp" in which the team travels to a new location for every camp (Paris, Copenhagen, New York, and Miami are some previous destinations) and the seasonal creative direction is decided. During this process, the team decides the design language, themes, material direction, graphic direction, and color palette for the season. Going abroad for this process is a way for the design team to gain inspiration from other parts of the world into their designs.

Before fully developing the fabric created during the design camp, the materials direction is presented to vendors to give Puma and vendors the opportunity to talk about new seasonal ideas, new developments, and what the vendors do and do not like about the designs. From there, the fabric development process begins. First in the fabric development process is figuring out costing and margins to ensure fabric pricing fits into the final garment cost. Quality testing also needs to be done in order to check for things like pilling, snagging, seam slippage, colorfastness, and to ensure each garment fits into country specific standards. Performance testing is also done to check for wicking, warmth, wind resistance, water resistance, and UPF quality. After also processing the print and graphic of the fabric, troubleshooting is done in order to solve any issues with quality, performance, logistics, pricing, and account feedback.

Through her role at Puma, Penswick has had the chance to work through this process for the 2016 Olympics, Puma Fenty by Rihanna runway collection, collaborations with brand ambassadors, the America's Cup, and Puma's NYC Ballet sponsorship.