

Writing Thread Specifications to Assure Seam Integrity

Most companies sourcing globally sewn products have found that one way to minimize quality issues is by specifying trim items that go into their products. Key trim items include zippers, buttons, labels, interlining and *thread*. Often the trim items getting specified are zippers, buttons & labels that add brand identity to your finished products. But often thread is an overlooked trim item that has the greatest impact on your seam quality.

Does thread really have an impact on your seam quality?

Below are just a few ways that improper thread selection can impact seam quality:

- Restitched seams due to Thread Breakage, Skipped Stitches
- Restitched seams due to Cut or Broken Stitches after laundering
- Poor Stitch Appearance
- Poor Color Fastness (Fading or Transfer of color)
- Excessive Seam Puckering
- Seam Failures

Therefore, do not risk your company reputation and brand integrity by gambling on seam integrity. What do we mean by gambling on seam integrity?

- Having no engineered thread specs for thread type and size, or having the wrong spec.
- Trusting the Contractor to use what is best for your products.
- Assuming that Returns are the only indication of dissatisfied Customers.

What impact does poor seam quality have on your costs? Poor seam quality can affect you in the following ways:

- Rejections of work due to poor quality either at the point of origin or in your Distribution Center.
- Increased hassle of dealing with problems rather than getting products to market.
- Delays and missed Shipping Dates.
- If you cannot put product on the shelf, you are unable to sell it. Therefore, lost sales.

- Tarnished Brand Name due to dissatisfied Customers.
- Lost Customers.

Not every product requires rigid thread specifications. However, on many sewn products it is highly recommended that the correct thread type and size be used in order to minimize quality issues.

What are examples of applications where specifying performance threads will really make a difference in the quality of your finished products?

<u>Sewn Product</u>	<u>Brand /Thread Type</u>	<u>Reason</u>
Denim	Perma Core [®] / D-Core [®]	To minimize repairs & restitched seams after sewing and due to broken stitches after laundry
Woven Shirts, Blouses	Perma Core [®] Ultimate	To minimize major causes of seam puckering
Performance Knits	Perma Core [®] + Wildcat Plus [®]	To provide greater seam elasticity. To minimize open seams due to stitch cracking.
Workwear & Uniforms	Perma Core [®]	For great seam durability and color fastness.
Casual Pants &, Chinos	Perma Core [®] or Perma Core [®] Ultimate	To help minimize seam puckering and open seams
Tailored Clothing – Suits, Jackets, Overcoats	Perma Core [®] or Perma Core [®] Ultimate, D-Core [®]	To help minimize seam puckering and provide a quality stitch appearance
Footwear	Anefil Nylon [®]	To minimize repairs, seam failure, and customer returns
Soft Home – Comforters & Bedspreads	Perma Core [®]	To minimize interruptions on multi-needle quilting machines that result in excessive restitched seams.
Embroidery	Super Brite [®] Polyester, Super Strength [®] Rayon, J Metallic [®]	To use consistent embroidery colors

The A&E thread Brands mentioned above are “Best” brands for the applications mentioned. A&E also has “Better” and “Good” quality brands for products that are sold at a lower price point.

Below is a process for evaluating where to start when writing thread specifications. Many companies have found that writing thread specifications is as simple as nominating approved thread companies for their global needs. On the other hand, on certain products it may be advantageous to make specific thread recommendations to assure the quality of the finished products going to market.

WHAT MERCHANDISE SHOULD YOU CONSIDER USING NOMINATED THREAD COMPANIES AND THREAD SPECIFICATIONS?

Key brands that are your core products that influence consumer brand acceptance

- To begin with, your sewn products that are key to the reputation of your company and brand campaigns.
- 2nd, for your sewn products that have excessive customer returns or complaints.

WHERE TO BEGIN IN DEVELOPING A NOMINATION PROGRAM & WRITING THREAD SPECIFICATIONS?

- 1st nominate thread suppliers that can provide your global vendors and contractors with quality thread products
 - Suggested criteria for selecting approved thread companies
 - Global thread companies like A&E who can provide the same high quality products
 - Global thread companies like A&E that can provide quick response services for pre-production samples.
 - Global thread companies like A&E who can provide your contractors with quality thread in a timely manner to meet your quick response to market needs.
 - Thread companies that can provide innovative products and ideas that can add value to your products.
 - Thread companies that can provide performance products at regionally competitive thread prices
 - Thread companies that run their business in an eco-friendly manner that meets your company's sustainability goals.

- 2nd list approved thread vendors in your quality manual and also on your BOM's.
- 3rd Add colors on your tech packs.
 - for contrast stitching and embroidery
 - Rather than DTM, for your seasonal colors
- 4th Specify a particular thread type and size for critical programs as mentioned above.
 - Example: A&E's– Tex-24 Perma Core[®] Ultimate to minimize seam puckering on their shirt programs
 - This would be necessary where there are special conditions that you know will improve the quality of the finished product by using a particular thread type and size.
 - Overcoming seam puckering
 - Minimizing seam failures
 - Providing a particular "look" or aesthetic value

MONITORING COMPLIANCE FOR THREAD SPECS

Developing minimum thread specifications is as critical as developing minimum requirements for your fabric, zippers, buttons and labels. As mentioned above, this can be as simple as putting your nominated suppliers on your tech pack BOM's, or actually specifying the thread size, type and color for specific sewing applications.

Along with this, it is also important that you develop a good system to monitor compliance, as well as a penalty system if your specifications are not adhered to.

Below are recommended methods of developing a robust compliance program for your trim component specifications.

- First, senior management must communicate internally within your organization the importance of having quality trim items used in your sewn products. There must be a "buy in" from sourcing.
- Second, communicate with your vendors and key contractors the importance of their complying with your companies component specifications. Explain the reason why this is important and the penalty if sewn products are made with non-specified products.

- Reasons for compliance
 - Insuring the quality of your sewn products using performance threads
 - Fewer sewn product defects
 - Fewer returns from the consumer
 - More satisfied customers
 - Purchasing from thread companies that have a proven track-record of operating their business in an Eco-friendly, sustainable manner.
- Establish a system to verify compliance to specifications.
 - On-site visits - Observe thread used on the sewing floor on your products
 - Verify purchases through thread suppliers. Most global thread companies can provide information on volume of thread purchased by your key contractors.
 - Conduct Garment Analysis to determine if the proper thread type and size are being used in your finished products.
- Overcoming push-back from contractors who would prefer to use local thread companies
 - A&E can provide you with the estimated thread cost per sewn product using specified threads ... to compare with the often over-stated thread cost increases that contractors use to try and persuade you to allow them to purchase from local thread vendors.

In summary most vendors and contractors will comply with your Trim specifications when they know you are serious about monitoring compliance. Other companies have Nominated Trim Vendor programs that are quite successful and have eliminated unwanted quality issues and possible delays due to not being able to produce their products right the first time.

Contact your local A&E Sales Representative for assistance.