

MARKETING

resources will continue to be a very high priority for the new management team in the future.

Hohenstein Institute America Adds Account Manager

Malinda Salter has joined Hohenstein Institute America as account manager. In her new role, Salter will provide technical support and customer service to the growing number of North American textile products manufacturers, brands and retailers who are utilizing Hohenstein's testing and certification services.

Salter brings to her new position international brand and mill experience as well as an extensive textile education, including studies at the University of Wisconsin, the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, and North Carolina State University. Initially, Salter will focus on Okeo-Tex Standard 100 certification clients. Hohenstein Institute America has seen significant increase in interest Okeo-Tex with North American textile companies.

Salter will work out of the Burlington, NC, office and report to Dr. Sam Moore, managing director of Hohenstein Institute America, a division of Hohenstein Institute representing the international textile testing and research organization in North America.

Woolrich Appoints Men's Merchandising Director

Woolrich has named Donna Fitch as director of men's merchandising. Fitch will be responsible for the brand positioning, assortment planning, pricing and design of Woolrich's Men's Outdoor Collection. Fitch joins Woolrich from Dickies, where she was Men's General Manager. Prior to Dickies, Fitch spent time with Columbia Sportswear, Eddie Bauer and Nordstrom. ●

OUT OF CONTEXT | KURT GRAY

Two Clear Trends Appeared at the Winter Outdoor Retailer Show: Product Extension, Vendor Dilution

Trend number one is the extension and enhancement of natural materials, such as wool and down, through the use of textile science.

The big example was Dri Down from Sierra Designs, where a hydrophobic treatment of the down produced huge benefits in the field. This is a profound change to a backbone element in sleeping bags and outdoor apparel. You can expect that within a year the technical players will be upgrading to some sort of technical down treatments of their own, it just makes too much sense. The market impact of the closing of the performance gap between synthetic and down insulation leaves unanswered questions: Is this a new category? Will technical synthetic insulation be pushed out?

Wool continues to evolve and shows absolutely no signs of slowing down. The interesting split between the 100 percent Merino folks and those committed to modifying or extending wool through blending with other fibers is widening. The technical innovations are just beginning on the blended side, and combined with the aesthetic enhancements they are able to achieve, the natural/synthetics will be a coming force. Pontetorto and Cocona both point the way to different, effective and beautiful uses of wool.

The second major trend was the obvious expansion of the show beyond its core audience.

The OR show is no longer just delivering a venue for brands that the buyers are interested in seeing, it now delivers outdoor buyers to new brands that either buy their way in, or are so insignificant that no one complains. The attendee demographic is being sold with resulting vendor dilution and a palatable loss of focus. I guarantee that you can't statistically measure the number of buyers who breathlessly wondered before they got to Salt Lake, "Gee, I hope Dickies will be here this year..."

In the '90s outdoor understood that its flavor was being co-opted by mainstream American culture. There were climbers in Jeep ads and carabiners started to hang from school packs across the land. The



Hybridization of materials is rampant in the Outdoor Industry. The combinations of wool and down, quilt and cable knit, and smooth and fuzzy are prescient. No longer content to piece together equivalent fabrics to create an expected silhouette, brands are now putting together different classes of materials in broader strokes, and in doing so are opening up a new vision outdoor apparel. These garments are often constructed from recognized elements; like boiled wool sleeves and shoulders, mixed with a down filled nylon chest and hood, and these combinations make them seem oddly familiar. Above: Bergans Osen jacket.

industry responded with the growth of 'mountain lifestyle' products, which shared a sensibility and were legitimized by the company's technical prowess and acceptance. But now the shoe is slipping onto the other foot.

Dickies' product, while possibly hanging in the same closet with an outdoor brand, is fundamentally different. It has a different point of view. It's made by a different kind of factory. There is a different premium placed on materials. Yet Dickies' shows at OR, hawking its wares to buyers who used to spend their pre-season dollars with outdoor brands.

'Outdoor' now means pretty much whatever your booth number wants it to mean.