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Levi Strauss & Co. Unveils First-of-Its Kind Design Process to Sustainability Thought Leaders and Pioneers at New Innovation Lab

Dockers® Wellthread, developed as part of the First Movers Fellowship at the Aspen Institute, marks a new generation of smart design that benefits consumers, apparel workers and the environment

SAN FRANCISCO (November 7, 2013) – Last night, Levi Strauss & Co. debuted the Dockers® Wellthread process for responsible sourcing at the company’s new innovation lab in San Francisco. This ground-breaking approach combines sustainable design and environmental practices with an emphasis on supporting the well-being of the apparel workers who make the garments. It is the first time the company has brought these key elements together into one process.

“How you make a garment is just as important as the garment itself,” said Michael Koberi, vice president of social and environmental sustainability at Levi Strauss & Co. “Our company has been guided by the same principles since its founding 160 years ago. We believe that we can use our iconic brands to drive positive sustainable change and profitable results. Progress is in our DNA. We invented a category and with that comes the responsibility to continually innovate for each new generation of consumers.”

Disposable, fast fashion is the antithesis of sustainability. Great, sustainable style starts with durable materials that last. As such, the Dockers® Wellthread design team studied garments from the company’s historical archives to see how clothing has held up over time, and from there created a pilot collection of khakis, jackets and T-shirts. The team engineered lasting value into the design process by reinforcing garments’ points of stress and making buttonholes stronger and pockets more durable.

The Dockers® design team and suppliers worked together to find ways to reduce water and energy use, knowing that small changes can result in big savings. This new process utilizes specialized garment-dyeing to reduce both water and energy consumption with cold-water pigment dyes for tops and salt-free reactive dyes for pants and jackets. In addition, the apparel is dyed in the factory, not in the mill – which allows for greater inventory agility because the garments are dyed-to-order.

The designers also considered responsible use and re-use with the end of the garment’s life in mind. Though recycling facilities are not widely available, the company anticipates that one day they will be. Extremely long staples of cotton can be more easily recycled, so the brand developed a unique, long-staple yarn for its premium Wellthread twill. In addition, every garment in the collection uses 100%

cotton, thread and pocketing. The sundries include compressed cotton or metal that can be easily extracted by magnets. Using a drying cycle is tough on fabric and hard on the environment, so the design team also added care instructions to wash in cold and a locker loop on the khakis to encourage line drying.

More than twenty years ago, Levi Strauss & Co. developed a code of conduct, called its Terms of Engagement, for its suppliers. These terms implemented standards for labor, safety and the environment that eventually became the industry standard for global supply chains. The company is now piloting a new approach with factories to support programs that will improve the lives of workers in factories around the world. The Dockers® Wellthread khakis are made at one of the Improving Workers' Well-Being pilot sites.

Rooted in the sustainable culture of Levi Strauss & Co., the initial vision for the Wellthread process and pilot collection took shape as part of the [Aspen Institute's First Movers Fellowship](#). From there, the idea moved to the company's new innovation lab, located next to its San Francisco headquarters, where the concept was brought to life, and where sustainable processes are developed for future product lines.

"The Dockers® Wellthread process is a remarkable achievement for the apparel industry," said Nancy McGaw, the founder and deputy director of the business and society program at the Aspen Institute. "The company took a risk on this groundbreaking vision and then supported it all the way through its implementation. Levi Strauss & Co. has a culture that inspires innovation."

The Dockers® Wellthread process is just one example of how Levi Strauss & Co. is working to make its products more socially and environmentally sustainable. The Levi's® Waste<Less™ collection features beautiful, durable jeans that are made from garbage, specifically, an average of eight 12- to 20-oz. recycled plastic bottles per pair of jeans. Another innovation, the Levi's® Water<Less™ collection reduces the amount of water used to make a pair of jeans. In 2012, the Levi's® brand proudly made 29 million Water<Less™ units, saving more than 360 million liters of water.

About Levi Strauss & Co.

Levi Strauss & Co. is one of the world's largest brand-name apparel companies and a global leader in jeanswear. The company designs and markets jeans, casual wear and related accessories for men, women and children under the Levi's®, Dockers®, Signature by Levi Strauss & Co.™, and Denizen® brands. Its products are sold in more than 110 countries worldwide through a combination of chain retailers, department stores, online sites, and a global footprint of approximately 2,800 retail stores and shop-in-shops. Levi Strauss & Co.'s reported fiscal 2012 net revenues were \$4.6 billion. For more information, go to <http://levistrauss.com>.

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