

## Talking strategy: global sourcing of premium brands



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Premium fashion brands represent an important segment of the global apparel industry. They are characterised by high prices and a strong reputation for quality and modernity in terms of design. Examples of premium brands include Dolce and Gabbana (D&G), Escada, Hugo Boss, Roberto Cavalli and Versace.

Many manufacturers of clothing strive to win orders with key designers of premium brands because the latter offer relatively large margins and high volume orders. And once a strong working relationship has been established, those manufacturers will strive to satisfy their customers' needs.

But from the point of view of the owner of a premium brand, finding good manufacturers is becoming increasingly difficult. The range of choice for buyers of premium brands has narrowed considerably in recent years as the rate of closures of "skilled" factories has accelerated, aggravated by the recent financial crisis. In addition, clothing factories which remain tend to be located far away from target markets which has squeezed lead times to a tighter degree than ever before.

In talking strategy this quarter, the director of operations with responsibility for the purchasing department at Escada, Jan Hilger, provides insight into some of the factors involved when sourcing premium branded clothing.

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