

# Collaboration, Sustainability and 3D: PI Apparel Event Debrief

by Lauren Crawley, Al Meyers and Will Yester

In February, representatives from the largest retail and brand organizations gathered in Los Angeles for the [PI Apparel](#) event to share experiences in innovation, product development, and advancements in technology. Disruption in the industry is at an all-time high and technologies that are entering the space are changing the way retailers and brands do business. These changes are requiring a higher level of collaboration than ever before. The message from the keynote speaker was “collaborate or die” suggesting that the only way to succeed in today’s changing landscape is to work together as retailers, manufactures, and suppliers.

How will RFA companies respond? Here are some of our key takeaways from the event.

## Focus on Standards for Interoperability

Retailers and brands are striving to make huge changes in the way they operate. Everything from Digital Product Creation to Product Lifecycle Management require retailers to invest in new technology. The message is to work together as an industry to ensure these systems can talk to one another and eliminate proprietary input and output. Compatible systems and a data structure that is consistent across the industry will eliminate the need to have different tech packs among different companies and will ultimately be beneficial to all involved. Like being able to text an Android from an iPhone, the retail industry craves interoperability between companies.

## An Eye Towards Sustainability

Did you know a pair of jeans takes 1600 gallons of water? How about 700 gallons for a t-shirt? These are some of the many key findings The Gap learned during exploration of their environmental footprint. The good news is the environmental impact is dictated 80% by design, so there are changes that can be made. Education of designers on topics like construction, use & care instructions, and designing with end-of-life in mind can have substantial effects on the environmental impact of a garment. Other advancements being made in the material space include growing cotton with less water in a zero-gravity environment and exploration of [cationic-cellulose nanofibers](#) and [stinging nettle fibers](#). Sustainability is not a trend but is here to stay and resonates with key consumers – specifically a younger generation.

## 3D is Key

Supporting the notion of sustainability being key for the future, 3D product creation is a hot topic on everyone’s mind. Instead of physically creating prototypes and samples, 3D modeling allows retailers to view, edit, and share 3D images of products with their internal teams and outside parties; in some cases eliminating the need to create physical samples. Not only are there cost savings to this change but sample waste, logistic emissions, and carbon footprint are all improved. Other benefits include a faster speed to market, better fit modelling, improved marketing assets, and better products from more iterations. And, there was at least one example at the event of a vendor selling a line to a retailer virtually, with no samples. [3D.RC](#) is a retail coalition working to advance 3D technologies and provide direction, resources, and networking opportunities to accelerate the value of 3D digital transformations.

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