

## **Corporate Clothing Sustainability Product Recovery in the Supply Chain**

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The fashion and textile industry is currently facing pressures to develop more sustainable practices. High levels of consumption and disposal driven by fast fashion are generating significant amounts of waste. One key area where large multiple volumes of product are bought and consumed are in corporate clothing markets. There is a growing demand for uniforms to convey corporate identity and provide protection at work. The nature of the product means the same or very similar products are designed and distributed to a narrow market however supply chains typically demonstrate low levels of product recovery. Recycling and reuse methods that have proved effective for everyday clothing have not for corporate clothing, primarily due to their possession of company logos (Uniform Reuse 2009) and fibre blends make recycling more complex (The Textile Institute 2009). The recycling and reuse of general clothing is typically 27% (Textile Outlook International 2009) compared to corporate clothing where only 5% has been recovered (Uniform Reuse 2010). Hence there is a significant opportunity to improve the levels of waste currently generated by the corporate clothing market.

Waste Management Company Oakdene Hollins have identified a number of areas of corporate clothing which offer the greatest opportunity for recycling and reuse (Bartlett 2010), however it was not established as to how the supply chain could accommodate such recycling/reuse methods. Other companies such as Worn Again have been using corporate waste to produce a small range of products, such as transforming rain jackets into mail bags (Worn Again 2009), as well as exploring design for remanufacture. These companies have proved that recycling corporate clothing is possible but due to there being few examples and the solutions being on a small scale (in the case of Worn again) this suggests that the development of a new supply chain process for the recycling/reuse of corporate clothing could enable such a practice to become common place.

This research explores the supply chain for corporate clothing to incorporate a more sustainable form of end of the life management, enabling the recycling/reuse to become widely practiced. Based on interviews of identified members of the supply chain, such as corporate clothing providers, purchasers and recyclers plus experts within the field, a series of supply chain maps are presented considering the possible avenues for the recycling and reuse of corporate clothing. These avenues are quantified, taking into account logistical issues, processes and the value of the end product, in order to identify the most feasible route(s) through cost/benefit analysis. The implications for the supply chain are considered and the changes required to logistics identified. This and the construction of case studies enables the mapping of a new supply chain process accommodating the recycling/reuse of corporate clothing. Finally, markets for such products are identified to determine the feasibility of recycling/reusing corporate clothing on a larger scale. This identifies the recovery component of the supply chain and potentially the development of a new business model for this sector.