Writing Thread Specifications

Introduction

Many companies have found that by specifying the key trim items that go into their products, they can better assure the total quality of the finished product. Key trim items include zippers, buttons, labels, interlining, and thread. Thread only makes up a small fraction of the cost of the finished product but shares 50% of the responsibility of the finished seam. Can thread impact seam quality? Below are just a few ways that improper thread selection can impact seam quality:

- Restitched seams due to thread breakage and skipped stitches.
- Restitched seams due to cut or broken stitches after laundering.
- Poor stitch appearance.
- Poor color fastness (fading or transfer of color).
- Seam puckering / Needle cutting.
- Seam failures.

Therefore, do not risk your company's reputation and brand integrity by gambling on seam integrity. What do we mean by gambling on seam integrity?

- Having no engineered thread specifications for the thread type and size, or having the wrong specification.
- Trusting the contractor to use what is best for your products.
- Assuming that returns are the only indication of dissatisfied customers.

What impact does poor seam quality have on your costs? Poor seam quality can affect you in the following ways:

- Rejections of work due to poor quality either at the point of origin or in your Distribution Center.
- Increased hassle of dealing with problems rather than getting products to market.
- Missed shipping dates.
- If you cannot put product on the shelf, you are unable to sell it. Therefore, lost sales and lost customers.

Not every product requires rigid thread specifications. However, on some products, it is a must in order to minimize quality issues. Below is a process for evaluating where to start when writing thread specifications. Many companies have found that writing thread specifications is as simple as nominating approved thread companies for their global needs. On the other hand, on certain products it may be advantageous to make specific thread recommendations to assure the quality of the finished products going to market.

Process for Developing Thread Specifications

1) Determine what products have the greatest need for developing specification.
   - Products that are key to the development of your company reputation and brand campaigns.
   - By audits of incoming goods from vendors.
   - Measuring customer returns or complaints.

2) Determine the extent of the Thread Specification Program to guarantee the quality levels.
   - For entire sourcing program.
   - For products being sourced from certain geographical regions & suppliers.
   - For specific products (i.e., denim products)

3) Determine the Scope of the Thread Specification Program.
   - Specify suppliers that can provide consistent quality thread products globally.
   - Recommend using a specific vendor for critical items.
   - Specify a specific color off a vendor's color card or have DTM (dye to match).

Example One	**Example Two**
Vendor -W12345 off A&E Global Color Palette or C1234 off Coats International Color Reference Card.	Vendor - DTM The challenge of DTM is the time it takes to match and produce adequate inventories to service your contractor. Most vendors have minimum lot sizes for DTM shades. Also, most vendors will not accept returns of DTM shades. DTM would be necessary when shade is critical to possibly match coordinates made somewhere else.

4) Specify a particular thread type and size for the entire garment.
   - Example: Vendor - Tex-24 Poly Wrapped Core.
   - This would be necessary where there are special conditions that you know will improve the quality of the finished product by using a particular thread type and size.
     1. Overcoming seam puckering.
     2. Minimizing seam failures.
     3. Providing a particular "look" or aesthetic value.

5) Specify a particular thread type and size for each operation of a garment.
   - Example: All topstitching Operations on Jeans - Vendor- Tex-105 Cotton Wrapped Core - Color #12345 All looper threads - Vendor- Tex-60 Spun Poly - White.
   - This requires an intimate knowledge of the product being sewn and what are the critical operations and thread requirements.
   - Garments that will be subjected to harsh wash programs, such as Jeans, require specific threads to minimize "broken " and "cut-stitches".

6) Write the Specification and communicate it properly.

7) Establish a system to verify the compliance to the specifications.
   - On-site visits:
     1. Observe thread usage.
     2. Audit order book - purchasing documents.
   - Verify purchases through thread suppliers.
   - Garment Analysis to determine if the proper thread type and size is being used in the finished product.