

Milliken's David Smith on Circularity, Sustainability and Supply Chain

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MILLIKEN'S HEADQUARTERS

David Smith steps into a new promotion as executive vice president and president of the Textile Business after more than 40 years with [Milliken](#) & Company.

Most recently senior vice president of engineered performance products and nonwovens for the Spartanburg, S.C.-based company, he will oversee [Milliken](#)'s Textile Business unit encompassing seven main business lines and employing over 4,000 associates across the globe, including 27 manufacturing sites.

Smith, who will oversee the company's diverse textile portfolio, discussed with Sourcing Journal his outlook and plans for his new position.



DAVID SMITH

Sourcing Journal: What are your top goals in your new role as president of Milliken's Textile Business?

David Smith: So far, it's been incredible to jump into this role and engage with our textile associates around the globe. Looking at our goals for the short- and long-term, a lot of it comes down to people. The initial focus is alignment: aligning our entire global team on our purpose and the work that needs to be done to move us forward, including accelerating growth across our portfolio to provide more opportunities for our associates.

We are also working to elevate the customer experience and increase the impact and velocity of our R&D efforts. Our goal simply stated is to be highly valued by our stakeholders: associates, customers, suppliers, shareholders and the community.

SJ: What are Milliken's key textile products?

DS: Milliken [textiles](#) are incredibly diverse. Our products move you, connect you, comfort and protect you. The major industrial markets served include automotives, airbags, bedding, building and infrastructure, pressure sensitive tapes, tire and mechanical rubber goods, and numerous other industrial applications. Our performance apparel products include workwear, military and defense, as well as Westex fire resistant fabrics for utility, electrical workers and firefighters.

We also manufacture hospitality and commercial interior and outdoor fabrics. Finally, our [Polartec](#) brand is well known around the world as a leader in sustainability, comfort and performance for outdoor apparel. We manufacture far more than the shirt on your back and we make that, too. Our products are truly everywhere and anywhere.



MILLIKEN'S HILLCREST PLANT

SJ: How important are sustainability and circularity to the textile business?

DS: Being a good steward of the resources entrusted to our care is fundamental to living out our purpose, which states “together we strive to positively impact the world around us for generations to come.” It’s in our DNA. A great example is our commitment to eliminate all per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) substances from our textile fiber and finishes portfolio by the end of 2022.

Circularity certainly is a hot topic in our industry. We’re committed to taking an active approach to making circularity a scalable and hopefully at some point in the future, the standard, in the industry. That commitment is evident in our recent partnership announcements with Accelerating Circularity and Circ.

SJ: How important is [Milliken](#)’s place as a venerable U.S. textile manufacturer?

DS: We are proud of the name on the door and what it represents. We are a family-held, values-based company with a clear and compelling sense of

purpose and a vision that moves us forward. We are incredibly proud of our heritage and excited about the future. The best is yet to come.

SJ: What do you see as the key challenges in textile sourcing right now for the company and the industry?

DS: The pandemic and post-pandemic recovery exposed the industry's weak links. On the flip side, it did create new opportunities. Building a more agile and resilient supply chain is top of mind for many of our customers and with a manufacturing footprint that spans North America, Europe and Asia, we're in a great position to provide the peace of mind our customers are seeking.