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# Leading retailer The J. Jill Group uses Freeborders PLM Suite to Speed Products to Market

**Freeborders PLM Suite To Integrate Product Data Systems and Streamline Processes via Web-Based Enterprise Solution**

### The J. Jill Group

The J. Jill Group is a multi-channel specialty retailer of high quality women's apparel, accessories and footwear. The Company currently markets through catalogs, retail stores and an e-commerce website. J. Jill is designed to appeal to active, affluent women age 35 and older.

### The Challenge: Product Lifecycle Inefficiencies

Even the most successful apparel retailers face the challenge of finding scalable and integrated technology solutions to manage dynamic changes in their business. The J. Jill Group uses paper to collaborate on specifications and designs, e-mail to manage product development issues, and numerous Excel spreadsheets to track line assortments and calendars. Consequently, product information is duplicated and in many cases, contradictory, causing confusion between supply chain vendors and product development groups. These inefficiencies add weeks, sometimes months, to the product lifecycle.

### The Solution: Freeborders PLM Suite

The Freeborders PLM Suite will provide The J. Jill Group a single web-based system to manage product development processes and collaboration. Unlike product development management (PDM) tools, which focus on the product design portion of the product lifecycle, Freeborders PLM Suite streamlines every link in an apparel retailer's supply chain, from concept to manufacturing.

Freeborders also works with J. Jill as a development partner, using its team of offshore developers to translate J. Jill's business requirements into software requirements and user friendly functionality.

### The Result: A Development Partnership

The J. Jill Group considers Freeborders a valuable development partner in the systematic improvement of J. Jill's product lifecycle. J. Jill is working with Freeborders to develop and implement new functionality in current and upcoming modules that will give users greater flexibility and usability.

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## Why Freeborders PLM?

Because J. Jill employs a lean IT department, J. Jill required software ready for all aspects of its business with a clean, web-enabled interface and easy configurability for standard users. The fully integrated, web-based modules of Freeborders PLM Suite, designed from the ground up to address the process pain of the apparel retailer, will provide a single, secure interface and data repository for all of J. Jill's product lifecycle data.

## A Process-Centric Development Approach

What separated Freeborders PLM from other vendors was its process-centric development approach. J. Jill required a configurable and flexible off-the-shelf application that also allowed them to leverage industry best practices built into the system.

"With Freeborders, a lot of thought has gone into the apparel retail user experience." said Randy Dow, Vice President of Information Systems at J. Jill. "We believe this will make Freeborders PLM Suite more easily configurable for standard users."

## Pre-Concept: Increasing Collaboration

J. Jill's needs started at the storyboard. The hardboards, typically in the industry, made storage, collaboration, tracking and version control virtually impossible.

Freeborders' digital storyboard module will allow J. Jill to create a version-controlled, shared central repository for its design themes and concepts. FB Storyboard can enable an iterative dialogue between J. Jill's design, creative marketing and merchandising teams and facilitate decisions on themes earlier in the process.

## Concept: Integrating Color and Raw Material Data

*Color*

J. Jill's previous systems required that internal and external users re-key color information repeatedly. Colors were not linked to fabric production or the BOM resulting in an enormous amount of manual, duplicative data entry to ensure colors were consistent across the development process.

With Freeborders PLM Suite's FB Library module, J. Jill users can create a palette library where designers can easily find and re-use any color previously used for future apparel lines. Colors can also be linked to specific fabrics and BOM, requiring only one entry during the development process.

*Fabrics*

Historically, J. Jill managed its entire fabric development process with Excel spreadsheets, from costing to requests to testing and approval. In addition, J. Jill tracked fabric sampling outside of Excel. Fabrics were re-keyed into the BOM and Design Card. FB Fabric & Trim, Freeborders' web-based digital raw materials management system, will enable J. Jill to cost, request and test fabrics online and collaborate with textile mills and supply chain partners to ensure a digitally integrated process.

*Line Planning*

Once colors have been finalized and fabrics costed and developed, J. Jill managers met to discuss design concepts and line planning. Sharing accurate line financials between internal groups was a manual and time-consuming process involving many separate reports pulled from numerous systems.

## Main Offices

FB Line Optimizer will enable J. Jill visibility into the line in development. J Jill has also been highly instrumental in building out FB Line Optimizer to include deeper planning and reporting capabilities.

### Development: Eliminating Bottlenecks

*Product Development*

When it came to specification costs and sample and attribute management, J. Jill had few tools to collaborate with vendors and very little integration between line planning and product development. Design cards were not integrated with specification sheets or the tech pack. Styles and silhouettes had to be re-entered.

J. Jill needed a tool to easily create tech packs for manufacturing while preserving color, fabric and trim data entered earlier in the product lifecycle. Freeborders PLM Suite's product development module, FB Product Manager, is a web-enabled solution that includes cost and sample information within each tech pack.

*Workflow*

J. Jill used Excel to manage product development calendars. FB Workflow will provide critical path management and enables vendor collaboration online, creating better visibility between J. Jill and its supply chain partners. FB Workflow will also offer high-level task management that will enable the J. Jill team to eliminate bottlenecks at the source.

### Summary: A Long-Term Development Partner

J. Jill continues to work closely with Freeborders PLM on developing extensions of its existing modules to give its users greater flexibility and enhanced usability. "J. Jill considers Freeborders a technology development partner in the traditional sense," Dow said. "Their out-of-the-box solutions enable the streamlining of many of our process inefficiencies and we plan to work closely with the Freeborders team in the long-term to develop new modules that suit our processes and our people."