

Printful Explains How On-Demand Manufacturing Reduces Global Textile Waste

How producing only what's sold is helping brands cut landfill waste, water usage, and carbon emissions

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-- As global textile waste reaches unprecedented levels, Printful is championing a smarter, more sustainable way forward. By placing on-demand manufacturing at the center of modern fashion production, Printful is helping brands eliminate overproduction and drastically reduce the environmental damage caused by traditional apparel systems.



On-Demand Manufacturing Reduces Global Textile Waste

The conventional fashion industry relies on forecasts and bulk manufacturing months before products ever reach consumers. This model has led to staggering waste, with the equivalent of one garbage truck of textiles landfilled or burned every second. For eco-conscious brands and buyers seeking meaningful change, the future lies in precision - not prediction.

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Davis Sarmins, Director of Growth Marketing at Printful

“Overproduction has been the fashion industry's biggest environmental blind spot,” says Davis Sarmins, Director of Growth Marketing at Printful. “At Printful, we've built a system where production only begins after a customer makes a purchase. That simple shift eliminates unsold inventory and removes one of the main drivers of global textile waste.”

The True Environmental Cost of Fast Fashion

Fast fashion has made clothing more accessible, but at an immense environmental price. In the

United States alone, 17 million tons of textiles are generated annually, with a significant portion ending up in landfills. Globally, as much as 40% of newly manufactured clothing is never sold.

These unsold garments represent wasted water, energy, labor, and raw materials. Cotton cultivation, dyeing processes, and large-scale manufacturing consume vast natural resources which are effectively discarded when clothing goes unworn.

Beyond landfills, the industry is responsible for approximately 10% of global carbon emissions and 20% of global wastewater. Synthetic fibers contribute to long-term microplastic pollution, while untreated dyes in some regions damage local ecosystems. For environmentally conscious consumers, these realities highlight the urgent need for systemic change.

How Printful's On-Demand Model Eliminates Overproduction

Printful's [print-on-demand \(POD\) model](#) replaces guesswork with data-driven precision. Instead of producing thousands of units upfront, each item is made only after it's purchased. This ensures every garment has a clear destination - its buyer.

By removing minimum order quantities and excess stock, Printful enables brands to operate without surplus inventory. There are no warehouses filled with unsold items and no seasonal overstock destined for disposal.

This approach also empowers smaller, eco-focused brands to enter the market responsibly. Without the need for large upfront investments or bulk production commitments, entrepreneurs can build sustainable businesses that prioritize both their profit and the planet.

Lowering Environmental Impact Through Technology and Local Fulfillment

Sustainability at Printful extends beyond eliminating overproduction. The company leverages digital [direct-to-garment \(DTG\) printing](#) technology, which uses water-based, non-toxic inks and significantly less water than traditional dyeing and screen printing methods.

Localized fulfillment centers across the US and Europe allow products to be manufactured closer to the end customer, reducing shipping distances and associated carbon emissions. This decentralized approach also strengthens supply chain resilience while lowering environmental impact.

Printful also offers a curated [catalog of eco-friendly products](#) made from organic cotton and recycled polyester, giving brands accessible options to align with environmentally responsible values.

Supporting Conscious Brands and Consumers

Today's buyers are increasingly aware of their ecological footprint. They seek brands that reflect their values and prioritize transparency, quality, and environmental responsibility. Printful's infrastructure allows businesses to meet these expectations without compromising growth.

With no minimum order requirements, global fulfillment capabilities, and an expanding eco-conscious catalog, Printful equips brands to launch and scale sustainably from day one.

Building Toward a Circular and Zero-Waste Future

While on-demand manufacturing is not a complete solution to the fashion industry's environmental challenges, it is a critical step toward a more circular system. By controlling the volume of clothing introduced into the market, on-demand production reduces the burden on recycling systems and landfill sites.

As innovation continues through advancements like made-to-measure sizing to reduce returns and increasingly efficient digital printing, on-demand manufacturing is positioned to become a standard rather than an alternative.

For eco-friendly brands and conscious consumers alike, Printful's on-demand model offers a practical, scalable path toward reducing global textile waste - without sacrificing creativity, profitability, or growth.

As the fashion industry faces growing regulatory pressure and evolving consumer expectations, Printful remains committed to leading the transition to a smarter, cleaner, and more responsible future for apparel manufacturing.

About Printful

Printful is a US-based print-on-demand and fulfillment company that enables entrepreneurs to create and sell custom products online without holding inventory. By integrating with leading ecommerce platforms and marketplaces, Printful allows sellers to focus on brand building and marketing while production, warehousing, and shipping are handled seamlessly.

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