

History of the EASI Organization

Embellished Activewear Companies Develop Industry Operating Standards

During the Long Beach, California Imprints tradeshow in January of 2001, a small group of Wholesalers and Manufacturers met and decided that the time was right to discuss the possibilities of standardizing common trading partner needs, similar to how UCC had done for Retail. The group, recognizing that it was an awkward assembly of both customers and competitors, felt that it needed the guidance and neutrality offered by a third-party consultant to facilitate the process. A follow-up meeting was set for the following month, February 2001 at the next tradeshow to be held in Tampa, FL. Invitations to the major distributors and mills were sent out to attend this meeting. At Tampa, fourteen forward-looking executives (8 manufacturers represented plus 6 distributors) met with the hired consultant and an attorney, and they agreed that the Embellished Activewear industry needed operating standards. The Embellished Activewear Standards Initiative (EASI) organization was born!

Over the first nine months, the members of the Embellished Activewear Standards committee sat down with each other and hammered out shared problems and potential solutions. By so doing, the group found ways to eliminate redundant costs and time that eat into profits. These operating standards for exchanging information will lead to greater efficiency for all parties and drive out unnecessary costs.

The standards project was initially funded by the sixteen sponsoring companies (listed below) and led by BSW Consulting, Inc., an independent firm specializing in distributor operations. A steering committee of company leaders supervised the project. They formed a Technical Standards committee consisting of high-level managers from operations, information technology, marketing, and supply chain services. Advisors on the project included the Uniform Code Council (UCC) that establishes international standards, VICS, (Voluntary Inter-industry Commerce Standards Association), and Quad II, a specialist in bar code technology.

The group's first priority was to set standards for the exchange of information related to the movement of goods from the manufacturer to the distributor. All agreed that this segment of our business relationship offers the greatest opportunity for efficiency improvement. This first phase dealt with the following:

- Product identification codes
- Case label information and bar codes
- Computer files containing information about the shipments

Key Decisions

After several months of research and discussion, the group finalized a set of operating standards. The major recommendations include:

1. The adoption of a Global Trade Identification Number (GTIN) for SKU identification. This identification is similar to the UPC code used throughout retail.
2. The creation of a “Master Style” level for product identification. All colors and sizes in a single style will carry the same style number.
3. The construction of Product Description Database (PDD) files that contain specific information about each GTIN (SKU).
4. The adoption of a standard Serialized Shipping Container Code (SSCC) to uniquely identify each carton.
5. The selection of a standard set of information to appear on every case label.
6. Fixing the location of the case labels on the case so that the barcodes are always in a standard position for scanning. Establishing wrap or dual, mirror image labels on adjacent sides for improved visibility.
7. Replacing all existing case label barcodes with 128 SYMBOLOGY GTIN and SSCC barcodes. Barcodes will be horizontal with the GTIN above the SSCC.
8. A standardized Advanced Ship Notice (ASN) file that will be available for distributors immediately after a shipment leaves the manufacturer. Information in the ASN will be linked to each unique carton through the SSCC.

Each of these key decisions ultimately led to the establishment of the E.A.S.I. formal standards.

Implementation Schedule

The standards group agreed to an aggressive implementation schedule to build momentum and to speed the benefits to the marketplace. Advanced Ship Notice (ASN) and Product Descriptor Data (PDD) files will begin appearing before the end of this year (2001). New case labels with standardized bar codes began to be used by members in 2002. Ultimately, sixteen standards were formally established and adopted by the group by 2008. In 2010, one of those standards (the 820 Pay Remittance) was formally retired by the membership due to its lack of usage. So today, there are sixteen (16) Standards established and currently in use by the E.A.S.I. members in transacting daily business together.

16 Original Sponsoring Organizations:

Distributors: Alpha Shirt Company; The Americana Company; Bodek and Rhodes; Broder Bros.; Full Line Distributors; LA Loving / Kayman; Mission Imprintables / McCreary Group

Manufacturers: Anvil Knit Wear; Fruit of the Loom; Gildan Activewear; Hanes Printables / Outer Banks Inner Harbor / Jonathan Corey; Premium Wear / Munsingwear; Russell Athletic / Jerzees/ Cross Creek; Toppers, Inc.; VF Brand Solutions

A New Direction for the E.A.S.I. Organization

Towards the end of 2006, the Executive Steering Committee evaluated the work that had been accomplished by the organization, and the costs associated with the BSW agreement, and determined that the membership could now manage their own activities without the added cost of a third-party. So as of January 2007, E.A.S.I. began operating without the oversight of a consultant, and has governed itself ever since.

Cost of membership was redefined to reflect the lower cost of operation, thereby encouraging more firms to become formal members and participate in the work of the Standards organization. Whereas initially all the cost burden was being borne by those original sixteen members, and the cost ran into thousands of dollars annually, the new structure only required members to pay a one-time membership fee of \$500. All other costs of operation, such as Annual Meetings and general administration, are assessed on a 'pay-as-you-go' basis. This has achieved the desired effect, as we now have twenty-nine Members of E.A.S.I. as listed below:

Current Membership (as of the 2023 Annual Meeting):

Distributors: alphabroder; American T-Shirt; Atlantic Coast Cotton; Century Place Apparel; LogoUP; Mission Imprintables; One Stop; S&S Activewear; SanMar; Staton Corp Casual; Trimark Sportswear; Threadfast Apparel

Manufacturers: Ares Sportswear; AST Sportswear; Augusta Sportswear; Badger Sportswear; Bella+Canvas; Big Accessories; Citadel Brands; Colortone; Dyenomite Apparel; Fruit of the Loom/Russell; Gildan Activewear; Hanes Brands; Hartwell Industries; LAT Apparel; Magic Apparel Group; Moshay, Inc./A4; Next Level / YS Garments; SOCCO Industries

Software Providers: eRetailing Associates; FastManager; FDM4 International, Inc; Infocon Systems; Timesaver Consulting; Tradelogic Software Group; UniformMarket; VICS; Winger Technology Solutions

Other Entities : Specialty Graphic Imaging Association

E.A.S.I. as a legal entity

As the organization matured from being a meeting of executives to a formal committee and then an organization with a clear purpose and real accomplishments, its leaders also recognized that we needed to be governed formally through a representative structure of officers and assigned responsibilities. At the same time, we recognized that we needed to establish and maintain a not-for-profit legal entity so that the business needs of the organization could be met, and funds could be handled in a proper manner. The Executive Steering Committee crafted a formal set of By-Laws on 9/14/07 and they were approved on 9/18/07. On that same date, the Embellished Activewear Standards Initiative Group, Inc. was legally chartered in the state of Delaware as a 501-C-3 corporation.

The By-Laws of the organization specify the purpose of the organization to be the following three statements:

- “To promote the standardization of common business information, processes and communication in the Embellished Activewear industry.”
- “To act as a forum for addressing business transaction standards between wholesaler and manufacturer in the Embellished Activewear industry.”

- “To increase efficiencies and reduce errors within the supply chain through the use of prevailing technology.”

The document also specifies the form of government and defines the elected offices and means of operation. It is a living & breathing source of organizational guidance, and it has been revised twice since its creation. On April 22, 2008, the group at its Annual Meeting modified Article 8.04 which addressed the timing of the installation of new officers. Then again at the Annual Meeting held on March 25, 2010, the membership amended Article 3.04 to reflect the change in domain name of our website.

Annual Meetings

As stipulated in Article 5 of our By-Laws and consistent with corporate law, our organization must hold an Annual Meeting to transact official business. Article 5.01 states that this meeting must be held “once in every calendar year” as our membership finds this to be the most suitable time from a business perspective. Prior to the establishment of our legal corporation and the By-Laws, the organization met twice per year and the recommendation of the consultant. The new group felt this was an added burden of cost on top of the higher membership fees at the time we could now avoid. So, it is the practice now for the E.A.S.I. organization to hold just one general membership Annual Meeting as required by our laws, while the Executive Steering Committee officers meet monthly via teleconference as required by Article 5.02.

At these Annual Meetings, a wide variety of business is discussed with emphasis on updating current standards, introduction of potentially new ones, and anything that is of interest to the members. A formal review of financial affairs is covered, and formal elections of officers and representatives take place. All members are billed for their estimated share of the meeting’s expenses for the one-day meeting event (meeting space and lunch) with attendees responsible for their own costs of travel and lodging. A ‘welcome dinner’ has been traditionally held the night before the meeting, and its cost has been borne by donations of some member companies. In keeping with our cost-conscious approach to all matters, we alternate locations of this meeting between the eastern US and the western US East Coast location being the site one year and the west coast site selected the following year. These sites offer the widest selection of low-fare airlines and the greatest number of meeting locations at reasonable costs.

Below is a history of recent sites for our Annual Meetings:

September 2023 - Austin, TX

October 2022 - Las Vegas, NV

November 2020 - Virtual

May 2019 - Scottsdale, AZ

April 2018 - Nashville, TN

April 2017 - Las Vegas, NV