



Digital transformation meets bespoke styling

Onward Holdings is a global producer of clothing. It has built a smart factory in Dalian, China, capable of supporting bespoke production at mass-market. The factory is dependent on a complex IT platform to ensure production runs smoothly. Fujitsu supported Onward's digital transformation from business flow design to process development.

About the customer

Onward Holdings is a clothing manufacturer, based in Japan. Founded in 1927, the group produces its own brands and manages joint ventures with international brands. Revenues in 2020 were \$2.3 billion.



Industry: **Manufacturing**



Location: **Japan**



People: **4,643 employees**



Web: onward-hd.co.jp/site/english

Challenge

To develop an IT platform on which to manage a digital, smart factory producing bespoke clothing orders.

Solution

- A single platform automating process management and route configuration for each order



Automated processes

have resulted in significantly reduced delivery times

“The Fujitsu production management platform allows us to digitize customer information and gather data on the production efficiency of each process.”

Gogo Tanaka, General Manager for Information Systems, Onward Holdings

Reimagining a smart production process

Onward is a global, \$2.3 billion clothing business. It mass produces clothing for its own labels and for international brands. Increasingly, it is using its factories to produce bespoke items for clients.

Not only does this require skilled craftsmen, but a complex process management system.

“At our current factory in Dalian in China, we have many skilled workers. Their professional work is essential for producing high-quality suits,” says Gogo Tanaka, General Manager for Information Systems, Onward Holdings. “We want to build a second factory in the city, built around IoT and other digital technologies.”

Takeshi Sekiguchi, President of Onward Personal Style Co., says this new area of business represents a global opportunity for the group: “This project aims to bring made-to-measure suits to everyone. I want our second factory in Dalian to produce high-quality, ready-made suits for people around the world.”

Digital transformation of the clothing factory

Tanaka says Onward had seen various smart factories but struggled to decide on the best route:

“We saw that factories in other industries were using their own systems. It was eye-opening and gave us a clue on how to achieve our goal. We had many different ideas but no unified direction.

We needed help in clarifying our approach.”

Fujitsu China took charge of building the production management platform. One prominent feature is using a single platform to link systems made by several vendors.

“We paid careful attention to the customer’s business strategies, and we shared these details with each vendor as we built the platform,” says Peinan Ning from Fujitsu China. “It is vital to realize the value the customer seeks in achieving digital transformation.”

“Fujitsu helped us to sort out all the different options into a single planning document,” says Tanaka. “This helped clarify the means to achieve our goals.”

Made-to-measure at mass-produced prices

The new Dalian factory, Kashiwama Individual, is built around the Fujitsu platform. Orders, fabrics, production status, shipping and other areas are now orchestrated on a single platform, using RFID, RPA, data conversion and master data integration.

Onward has also deployed a hanger system to automate process management and route configuration for each order. “Each made-to-measure suit has different measurements and cutting patterns, and workers need to take extreme care,” says Tanaka. “This system has allowed workers to focus exclusively on their own work.”

By successfully automating the mundane processes and intricate calculations, Onward has significantly reduced its delivery times.

Tanaka says the platform will be expanded to cover made-to-measure products under other brands: “This project has pushed the innovation of our company towards the direction we are aiming for. I believe we can use the same successful methodology to create an integrated, streamlined IT platform for the assorted, discrete systems in our different product lines.

“The Fujitsu production management platform allows us to digitize customer information and gather data on the production efficiency of each process at the factory. Moving forward, we would like Fujitsu to support us in analyzing and utilizing this data,” concludes Tanaka.