

Fair Traders Facility Design Student Design Case Overview

Fair Traders is an exceptional source for unique handmade gifts, jewelry, home decor, art and sculpture, textiles, serveware, and personal accessories representing the diverse cultures of artisans in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. As one of the world's largest fair trade organizations, Fair Traders is a founding member of the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO). They strive to improve the livelihood of thousands of disadvantaged artisans in 38 countries. Fair Traders accomplishes this by establishing a sustainable market for handmade products in North America and building long term buying relationships in places where skilled artisan partners lack opportunities for stable income. Product sales help pay for food, education, healthcare and housing for artisans who would otherwise be unemployed or underemployed. The company encourages artisan partners to use environmentally friendly processes, sustainable natural resources, and recycled materials to ensure each product offered has been crafted responsibly. Fair Traders is a nonprofit program, and has been named one of the World's Most Ethical Companies during their history on multiple occasions.

Fair Trader distributes products from their distribution center in New City, USA. The distribution center services their retail outlets throughout the United States, a consignment sales events business, and their emerging direct-to-customer (DTC) business. The DTC business volume is growing rapidly and is expected to continue its rapid growth over the next few years. They have a seasonal peak demand from mid-November through the end of December and it is significant compared to the annual average daily order count.

The focus of this student design case is on the DTC business. Fair Trader is actively seeking assistance in identifying the opportunities for improving their processes, particularly in light of an expected volume growth in both the upcoming year and the following year. The opportunities for improvement include a new layout, improved material flow, improved information systems, increased automation, and increased personnel support.