



## **THINKING OUTSIDE THE TRIANGLE®**

**by  
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The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed the way businesses operate and the way that students are being taught. Digital is not a new concept, but many schools, including Colleges and Universities have made a major shift to use technologies that have been available for quite some time. Virtual meetings have become a new norm for the Fashion Industry and for classrooms.

As TAPAC continues to develop its Accreditation Process, they too will need to establish more digital procedures for reviewing the skill sets that are being taught to students and understanding the changing needs of the Fashion Industry. As the industry shifts to more on-demand manufacturing systems, the processes for Product Design, Development, Marketing, Manufacturing, and Delivery will all become more digital. This will eventually lead to total automation and the startup of many micro-factory facilities that produce locally.

Given the pandemic that is gripping the world, innovation is more important now than ever before. Unfortunately, too many people are simply doing the same things in a slightly different way, expecting dramatic positive results. Now is the time to re-think and change the way that products (including education) are being developed, made, and delivered.

There are a number of opportunities that the Industry can look to in the future and Colleges and Universities can assist in the development of some of them. This includes:

1. 3D Printed Garments – This would involve the development of nano-particle fibrous substances that have the characteristics of traditional fabrics and can be processed through ink-jet heads into 3D garments and accessories.
2. 3D Design and Product Development – Designing all products in 3D and using avatars to present the actual look of the finished product.
3. Selection of Standard Sizes by Style and Custom Fit Measurements without Touching Customers – 3D Body Scanning technology already exists, but it can be set up to allow customers to be protected against COVID-19 and order online by accessing their data from the cloud.
4. Replacement of Yarn-Dyed Woven or Knitted Fabrics – Digital Printing technology can help minimize the amount of fabric waste and reduce lead times through engineered prints that have the same look and feel of traditional yarn-dyed fabrics.

There are other opportunities that will be made available as the Industry moves forward; however, it is important to note that we must first think differently before we can do differently. If we can't think differently, we will not be able to do differently. However, just because we think differently does not guarantee that we will be able to do differently. For many years we have heard that to be different, we must "Think Outside the Box." But often we just find ourselves in a Bigger Box!

Innovation today will require that we learn how to "Think Outside the Triangle." If your job is to draw triangles, think about drawing five-line stars and each star will contain ten triangles! That is five lines instead of thirty! Unfortunately, at the very time that innovation is so needed, it may be harder for innovation to be stimulated.

One way to train ourselves to think and do differently is to change the order of things we do regularly, such as when we brush our teeth, and in what order we floss and brush our teeth. There is no right or wrong way to do most of the things we do regularly, but we get locked into patterns without even thinking about their order. When we change the order in which we do everyday things, it can cause uncomfortable feelings. Try it, and you will experience the discomfort. By changing the order of some things that we do automatically, we are training ourselves to think and do differently. This practice prepares us for bigger and more

important changes and can improve our ability to be innovative.

As we work our way through the impact of this pandemic, it will be critical for us to rethink the way in which classes are taught and the way that students are being prepared to begin careers in the Fashion Industry. In addition to rethinking, we should also change how we do what is important for students.

At the most recent TAPAC Board of Commissioners Strategic Planning meeting the topic of the pandemic was discussed. Several opportunities were identified, one of which was for TAPAC to become a leader in advising programs to better meet industry needs post COVID-19. They also discussed including industry in accrediting pursuit and advocating for the future of the industry as it becomes more digital and more online and less brick and mortar.