

Making a Difference

Passionate about Making an Impact

An Interview with Joseph R. Gromek,
President and Chief Executive Officer, The Warnaco Group, Inc.

EDITORS' NOTE In April 2003, Joe Gromek assumed his current role at Warnaco. Formerly the President and CEO of Brooks Brothers, Inc., from 1996 to January 2002, Gromek has also held senior management positions with Saks Fifth Avenue, Limited Brands, Inc., and AnnTaylor Stores Corporation. He is the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Volunteers of America and a member of the Board of Governors of the Parsons School of Design.



Joseph R. Gromek

COMPANY BRIEF The Warnaco Group, Inc. (www.warnaco.com), designs, sources, manufactures, and markets a broad line of intimate apparel, sportswear, and swimwear worldwide, under brand names including Warner's, Olga, Calvin Klein, Speedo, and Chaps. Warnaco's products are distributed domestically and internationally, primarily to wholesale customers through multiple distribution channels, including major department stores, independent retailers, chain stores, membership clubs, specialty stores, and other stores and mass merchandisers, including Macy's and other Federated Department Stores, J.C. Penney, the May Department Stores, Kohl's, Sears, Target, and Wal-Mart.

What was the impetus behind the creation of the Warnaco Foundation?

In the past five years, Warnaco has made significant progress positioning ourselves as the industry's premier global apparel company. As we grow the business, our global presence will increase, and it is very important to the company's leadership and associates that we take our responsibility as a corporate citizen very seriously. To facilitate this, the foundation was set up as a tax-exempt entity in 2005, and an associate advisory committee was selected to ensure representation from each division and office across the United States.

What is the foundation's mission and how do you engage your employees in it?

We met on a recurring basis to formulate the mission of the Warnaco Foundation and to identify the causes that best represented Warnaco and the sentiments of our employees. It was clear from the very beginning that our associate population is passionate about making an impact and having firsthand experience with the foundation's initiatives. The associate

advisory committee researched and prepared a giving strategy that allows us to give at a global, local, and personal level, as well as presented potential sponsors for long-term partnerships and hands-on opportunities to our board.

The mission of the Warnaco Foundation is to benefit future generations in the communities in which we live and work by pledging our time, energy, and financial resources to the initiatives that we support. We agreed that the major areas that we wanted

to focus on are: children and youth, education, and mentoring. We plan to align ourselves with one or two organizations that will help us maximize our giving. At the local level, we will plan service days and other volunteer opportunities for our employees, and we plan to implement a gift-match program that supports employees' individual giving efforts. Right now, our priorities for the foundation are to ensure that we maximize every dollar spent and engage as many Warnaco employees in the foundation as we can. We want our employees to feel good about working for Warnaco because they are proud of the impact we are making in the places we live and work.

How will you measure the success of the foundation's efforts?

We are going through a rigorous screening process with our potential long-term sponsors and working with them to find ways to ensure that our dollars go directly to the children that need them the most. We are really going to rely on our partner, when we make our final decision, to provide reporting and measurement on the money we give. Internally, we are already committed to measuring the engagement of our employees on an annual basis. In addition, I think we will start to see other evidence of engagement with the foundation. I expect the number of volunteers at our service day events to increase and the response to the gift-match program will definitely be an indicator.

What partners do you plan to work with?

Partnering with an organization is critical for the foundation right now. It will be critical for us to partner with a reputable organization with a strong and developed infrastructure to help facilitate some of the administrative aspects of giving.



As a global company, is it important that the foundation has a global impact?

Because of our position as a global corporation, we are exploring relationships with several organizations that have presence not only in the U.S., but also internationally. It may be necessary to partner with more than one organization to impact all of the areas we desire. We would like to strike an appropriate balance between the U.S. and international areas. We would also like to find a balance between education and mentoring the future leaders of today, while also contributing to some of the more basic needs of children throughout the world. Our mantra right now is: global, local, personal. We need the foundation to hit on all three levels.

How critical is the role of Warnaco leadership in communicating your efforts to employees? How will you make sure you keep your people engaged in these efforts?

We launched the foundation at our annual employee meetings in March, taking that opportunity to send the message that this is a critical focus for 2008 and for Warnaco's future. As far as sustaining that engagement, if we continue to provide our employees with opportunities to make an impact in their local communities, I don't think we need to do much more. Of course, we will celebrate those employees in our newsletters and across our intranet, but I think that the momentum will build amongst the employees themselves, as this begins to become part of our culture. The challenge will be creating that experience in all of our locations across the globe.

What are the Warnaco Foundation's key priorities?

The key priorities are identifying our long-term sponsor and creating an exciting kick-off for the employees. In addition, we need to ensure we are prepared internally to sustain this important initiative. ●

A volunteer takes the future generation ice skating, one of many activities sponsored by the Warnaco foundation.