CONCEPT

Fashion Retail Supply Chain and Merchandise Planning: Open-to-Buy, Allocation and Markdown

30 November – 4 December 2026
London - Central London four-star



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Introduction:

A weak fashion retail supply chain shows up as bestsellers sold out in week two, slow lines buried in markdown, missing sizes in half the doors and cash tied up in stock bought on last season's guess. This Core Concept course trains merchandisers, buyers, planners and apparel sourcing staff to build a season from the fashion calendar through range architecture, open-to-buy, vendor lead times, allocation, in-season chase decisions and clearance. Participants produce a Seasonal Merchandise and Supply Plan for a case fashion category, with a buy budget, flow calendar and markdown cadence.

Course Objectives:

- Build a seasonal merchandise financial plan and open-to-buy budget from sales, margin, stock and markdown targets
- Construct a range and assortment plan that balances breadth, depth, price architecture and core versus trend options
- Select apparel sourcing models and set critical path lead times that match speed-to-market needs for each product type
- Set initial allocation quantities, size ratio packs and replenishment rules by store cluster and online channel
- Analyse in-season sell-through, weeks of cover and GMROI to decide chase orders, stock transfers and markdown timing
- Produce a Seasonal Merchandise and Supply Plan that includes traceability requirements for fibre and garment suppliers

Target Audience:

- Merchandising staff who own sales, margin and stock plans for a fashion department or category
- Buying staff who select ranges, negotiate cost prices and place orders with garment vendors
- Planning and allocation staff who distribute stock across stores, regions and the online channel
- Apparel sourcing and production staff who manage vendor critical paths, samples and shipments
- Inventory and distribution staff who handle replenishment, inter-store transfers and returned stock
- Product development staff who translate trend direction into line plans and cost targets

Course Outline:

Day 1: Fashion Calendar, Seasonality and the Apparel Value Chain

- Apparel Value Chain Map: Fibre, Fabric Mill, Garment Maker, Distribution Centre and Channel
- Fashion Calendar and Critical Path: Trend Direction, Line Review, Sampling and Launch Gates
- Seasonal Versus Fast Fashion Operating Models: Drop Frequency and Quick Response Manufacturing
- Product Lifecycle Types: Core Basics, Seasonal Fashion and Short-Life Trend Items
- Current-State Diagnostic of Last Season's Stock Outcomes by Category

Day 2: Merchandise Financial Planning, Open-to-Buy and Range Architecture

- Top-Down and Bottom-Up Merchandise Financial Plan: Sales, Intake Margin and Closing Stock
- Open-to-Buy Calculation and Monthly Receipt Phasing Worksheet
- Range Plan Architecture: Option Counts, Breadth and Depth by Price Tier
- Assortment Planning by Store Grade and Climate or Lifestyle Cluster
- Line Plan Sign-Off: Newness Ratio, Carry-Over Styles and Colourway Rationalisation

Day 3: Apparel Sourcing, Lead Times and Stock Allocation

- Garment Sourcing Models: Full Package, Cut-Make-Trim and Vendor-Owned Design
- Lead Time Decomposition: Fabric Booking, Production, Transit and Distribution Centre Processing
- Nearshore Versus Offshore Trade-Off Matrix: Unit Cost, Minimum Order and Speed-to-Market
- Initial Allocation Model: Store Capacity, Presentation Minimums and Online Reserve
- Size Curve Analysis and Pre-Packed Size Ratio Design by Cluster

Day 4: In-Season Trading, Markdown Optimisation and Omnichannel Flow

- Weekly Trade Review: Sell-Through Rate, Weeks of Cover and Stock-to-Sales Ratio
- Chase, Cancel and Reorder Decisions Using Open-to-Buy Reserves
- Markdown Cadence and Clearance Optimisation: Depth, Timing and Margin Recovery
- Omnichannel Stock Pool: Ship-from-Store, Online Returns Re-Merchandising and Inter-Store Transfers
- GMROI Review and Apparel Traceability Controls: Fibre Origin, Chemical Restrictions and Supplier Mapping

Day 5: Seasonal Merchandise and Supply Plan Modelling Build

- Case Fashion Category Brief: Historical Sales, Returns Rate and Vendor Base Data
- Open-to-Buy and Range Plan Spreadsheet Build for the Case Season
- Critical Path and Receipt Flow Calendar Build With Allocation Quantities
- Markdown Scenario Test: Sell-Through Targets Versus Closing Stock Exposure
- Seasonal Merchandise and Supply Plan Presentation and Merchandise Director Review

Skills You Will Gain:

- Merchandise Financial Planning
- Open-to-Buy Management
- Range and Assortment Architecture
- Apparel Critical Path Control
- Size Curve Optimisation
- Stock Allocation Modelling
- Markdown Optimisation
- Apparel Supply Traceability

Why Attend This Course:

- Return with a Seasonal Merchandise and Supply Plan built on a case fashion category, ready to adapt to your own range
- Stop committing the whole budget pre-season by keeping an open-to-buy reserve for chase orders on proven sellers
- Cut missing-size complaints and end-of-season leftovers by matching size packs and allocation to each store cluster
- Compare buying, planning and sourcing practice with peers from department stores, specialty apparel, sportswear and online fashion

Conclusion:

Fashion stock only earns its margin when the buy, the flow and the markdown are planned as one season. The course moves from the fashion calendar, value chain and operating models, through merchandise financial planning, open-to-buy and range architecture, to sourcing models, lead times, allocation and size curves, then to in-season trading, clearance, omnichannel stock and traceability. The final day turns these methods into a Seasonal Merchandise and Supply Plan for a case fashion category, reviewed as a merchandise director would review it.