



GUIDE

APPAREL SIZING BEST PRACTICES FOR BRANDS AND RETAILERS

A critical fit implementation strategy that personalizes the retail experience to drive conversion and reduce returns.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Apparel brands can benefit enormously from a meaningful sizing strategy to scale their business, attract and retain more customers, increase AOV and conversion, and significantly reduce return rates to improve revenue. This guide provides an actionable outline around supercharging sizing, the steps to implement it, and the metrics for success.

Based on over eight years of research done by Bold Metrics - a B2B SaaS company leveraging consumer body data and AI Body Modeling technology to help brands like Canada Goose, Burton, Men's Wearhouse, and Mac Weldon, amongst others, thrive in retail.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

02

Executive summary

Table of contents

03

Introduction: Why do brands need a sizing strategy?

04

Reasons for a fit strategy

05

Diagnostic run - what's next?

Fielding returns - driving lasting results

06

The challenge: Standard sizing is a myth

The solution: Phase 1 - Implementing an actionable fit strategy

07

Phase 2: Data collection and analysis

Phase 3: Developing a consistent sizing system

08

Phase 4: Implementing holistic sizing policies and procedures

Personalizing the online sizing experience on a per garment basis

Sustainability

09

Conclusion

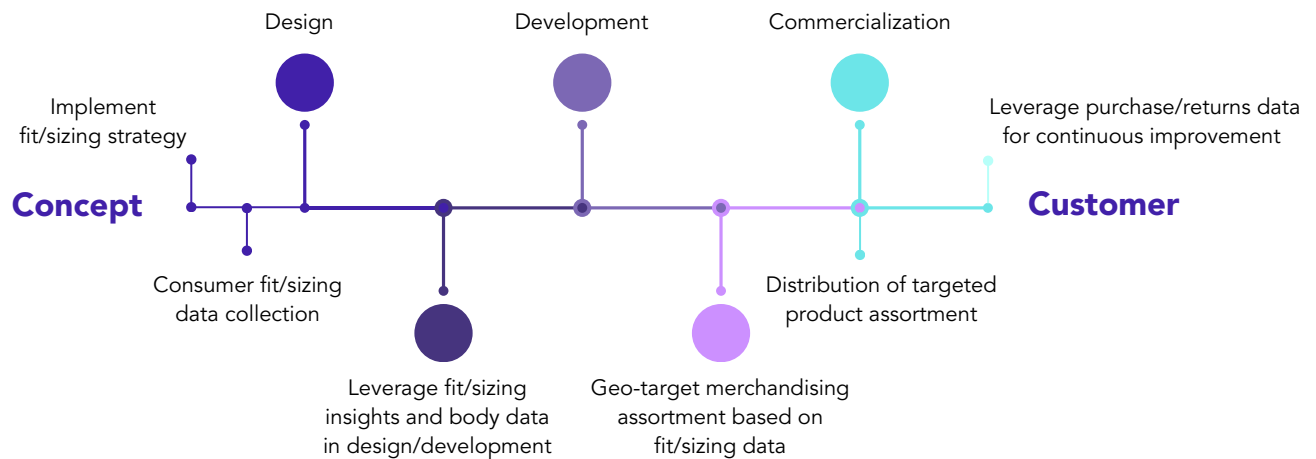
Why Bold Metrics

10

Closing page

INTRODUCTION

What constitutes a fit and sizing strategy for apparel brands, clothing retailers and apparel manufacturers?



Fit/Sizing Strategy from Concept to Consumer: fit and sizing implementation timeline and its impact on the product lifecycle.

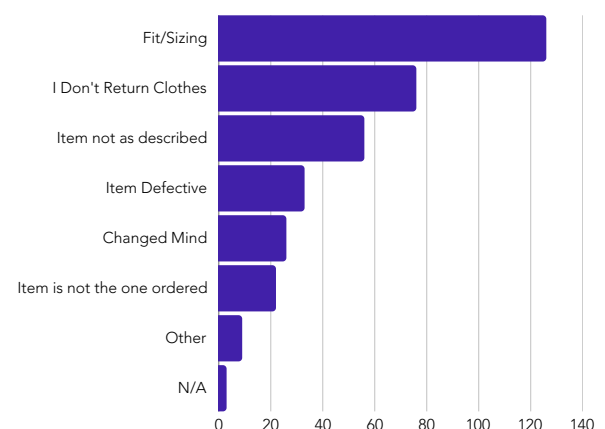
A fit strategy examines a brand's existing fit and sizing process, looking at how, for example, a company sizes its apparel products and how it grades its sizing to scale up or down a product's fit in the same style. A diagnostic is carried out on a brand's current size offerings and whether it uses fit models, size charts, video, product details, or virtual fit technology to address sizing concerns and help its customers better understand how a garment will fit and manage shopper expectations. From there, areas of improvement/weakness are identified, and the right sizing solutions are matched depending on the need and desired outcomes.

Integrating a fit strategy at an apparel brand's inception or early on is vital to maximizing impactful results. Still, it is never too late for existing brands to introduce a data-driven fit and sizing process. Developing a long-term strategy for success includes putting educational measures in place and resources to continually enhance and improve the customer experience around fit and sizing from product to distribution. A set of metrics are identified and established to measure the impact of the sizing strategy. Routine audits should be conducted yearly or bi-annually to check if goals are being met and what actionable steps to take if they are not.

WHY DO BRANDS NEED A SIZING STRATEGY?

Fit is a core component and essential consideration for any brand manufacturing and selling apparel (for example, fashion apparel, uniforms, sportswear, underwear, and hosiery). Customer body shapes and sizes can differ significantly, and a good product fit leads to higher conversion, better customer satisfaction, greater revenue, fewer returns, and less excess inventory. Apparel returns due to fit are extremely high, up to 52%.¹ A good sizing and fit strategy addresses this.

Primary reason for online apparel returns



Returns drivers based on an "Online Purchase Study" survey with 221 respondents conducted by Bold Metrics, September 2022.

¹ "The Plague of eCommerce Return Rates and How to Maintain Profitability", Shopify, August 25, 2021

REASONS FOR A FIT STRATEGY:

1

High fit-related return rates

High return rates eat into your bottom line and indicate that your brand's product fit does not match your consumers' desired fit or sizing. According to data from Optoro², only 20-40% of the cost of a returned good can be recovered by a retailer – which quickly adds up to billions of dollars of lost revenue annually.

2

A consumer-centric approach

When it comes to discretionary goods like fashion and apparel, the customer experience is central to conversion. Making it easy for shoppers to find their best size personalizes the retail journey. Elevating the fit experience can increase average conversion by 20% or more.³

3

Low conversion rates

Studies have shown that a lack of confidence around sizing leads to bracketing and abandoned carts due to fit uncertainty disrupting the consumer retail journey at check-out. On average, 40% of shoppers bracket purchases at least occasionally, with 45% of those under 30 and 48% with incomes over \$100,000 indulging in the practice.⁴

4

Technical design optimization

Enabling designers with access to actual customer body data and target market size measurements will provide invaluable insights to inform technical product design. Create a scalable business model by leveraging geographical sizing data to enable brands to expand their size offering to match real customer body data.

5

Inventory challenges

Unforeseen supply chain challenges, stockpiling in response to COVID-19 disruptions, and rapidly changing consumer demand have led to retailers sitting on a record \$732 billion of inventory as of July 2022, a 21 percent increase⁵ from a year ago - a sizable challenge for any brand.

6

Sustainability

The total US eCommerce apparel returns due to fit in 2021 resulted in approximately 168,337 tons of landfill waste.⁶ Fit-related returns account for almost 50% of returns and a data-driven sizing strategy can significantly reduce this number.

² "Consumer Returns Report", Optoro Annual Report, 2016

³ "How AI will supercharge the future of fit for apparel brands and retailers", Bold Metrics, 2022

⁴ "Bracketing makes bedrooms fitting rooms", Navar, June 13, 2017

⁵ "Retailers' stockpiles mean deep holiday discounts starting now", Wall Street Journal, October 10, 2022

⁶ "Your brand new returns end up in landfill", BBC Earth, April, 2021

DIAGNOSTIC RUN - WHAT'S NEXT?

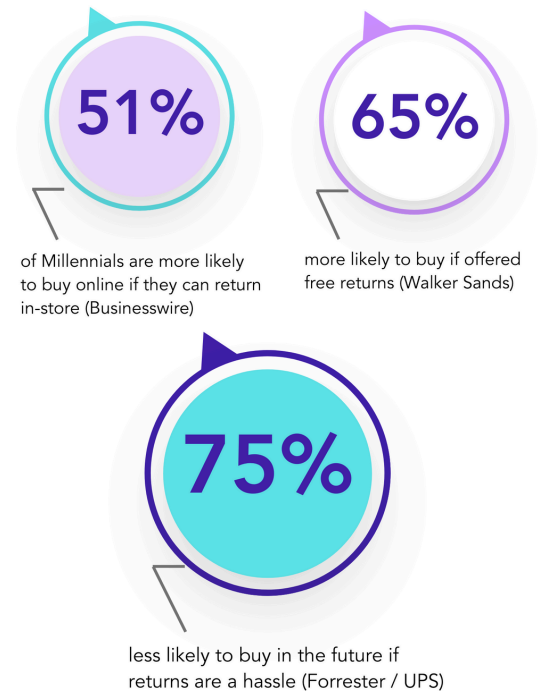
After a brand's current sizing is established, the next step will be to determine points of weakness that can be addressed and improved. For example, high return rates and low conversion can be a result of the following:

- Lack of information on the PDP to showcase fit and sizing, leading to poor fit confidence.
- Missing on-model imagery and model measurements for sizing reference.
- No or few product images showcasing how a garment fits.
- Lack of sizing tools or sizing aids that are confusing, inaccurate, or hard to find (i.e., size charts).
- Generous return policies that encourage shoppers to buy more and return those that don't fit.
- A disconnect between the expected fit and the actual fit.
- Technical product design and size grading does not reflect actual customer body measurements and the desired fit.

3 ways AI can supercharge
sizing to drive conversion,
reduce returns and personalize
the retail experience -
[Learn more here](#)

FIELDING RETURNS

Apparel companies can add value to the returns process for customers to boost conversion, but in the long run, this encourages bracketing behavior and drives up returns while reducing sales.



Percentages showing how returns policies affect consumer behavior and customer retention.

Driving lasting results

Providing customers with sizing confidence and instilling a comprehensive sizing strategy to eliminate fit-related returns is vital for long-term sales and revenue benefits and for improving the shopping experience for new and existing customers.

THE CHALLENGE:

Standard sizing is a myth

Ideally, brands and retailers should establish a standardized sizing system that is based on industry-accepted measurement standards, such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) or the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM).

In reality, sizing systems tend to be based on archaic or biased data that does not reflect the subtleties or complexities of a brand's target audience. Layered upon that is the concept of vanity sizing- a scaled-down sizing system employed by fashion brands to pander to customers' desires to fit into smaller sizes by relabelling their sizing to serve this purpose. Furthermore, size inconsistencies exist across different styles, even within a single brand, due to differences in material, construction, the intended fit of a garment, and a general lack of adherence to a consistent sizing process.

Global brands serving international markets or wider markets across different countries face sizing inconsistencies due to geographical fit and sizing/measurement discrepancies.

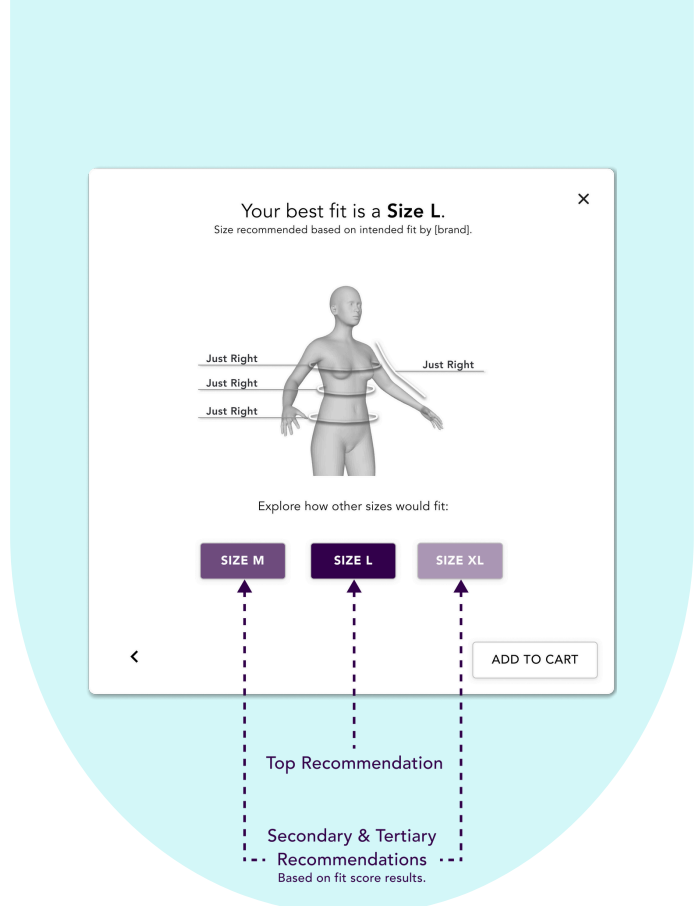
THE SOLUTION:

Phase 1

Implementing an actionable fit strategy

Not all brands have the same sizing needs. Some require a low lift to address minor discrepancies for fit, while others need a more in-depth approach.

- Evaluate current communication and documentation around fit based on best practices.
- Consolidate data-led insights for the brand based on its current sizing, garment tech pack data and any additional customer fit/sizing feedback.
- Build a scalable customer body data library to generate actionable data-led insights and create a fit and sizing model that accurately reflects the brand's or retailer's target market.



Providing contextualized fit recommendations for shoppers improves the retail experience with insights on exactly how a garment will fit across their body.

FIT TECH ADVANTAGES

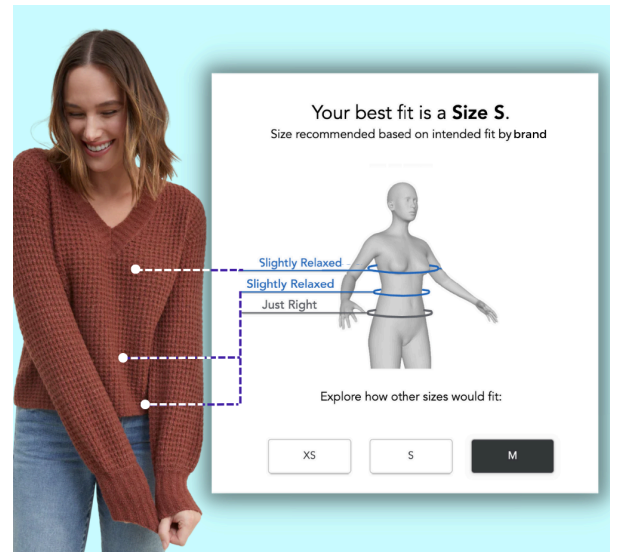
- Improve the customer retail experience
- Drive meaningful conversion
- Reduce fit-related returns and keep them down
- Enable data-led technical design insights

Phase 2

Data collection and analysis

Brands and retailers need to collect data on the fit of garments and body measurements, including information on how the garments fit different body types and sizes. This can be done through consumer feedback, focus groups, or other methods, enabling actionable insights on:

- Customer fit preferences - how the customers are wearing the product compared to how the product was designed to be worn.
- Technical product design based on actual customer feedback and body measurements, allowing brands to fine-tune the sizing of garments to improve their fit.
- Determining if their current messaging around fit is sufficiently coherent and consumer-centric.



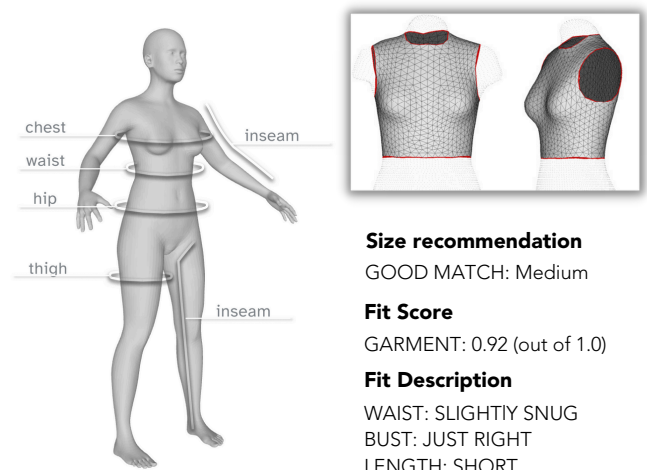
AI sizing solutions like Bold Metrics' takes into account individual fit preferences to contextualize fit at a granular level.

Phase 3

Developing a consistent sizing system

Once an accurate fit and sizing model has been established, the next step is to develop a consistent sizing system to be used across a brand's product line based on actual consumer data for the most accurate results. This includes:

- Clear and accurate sizing labels
- Detailed and relevant sizing information
- Measurement guidelines for each garment



Data-led insights from fit feedback and returns data can be layered with customer body data to improve technical product design from the product design stage.

Check out our quick [sizing strategy checklist](#) to see if your brand has everything in place to supercharge sizing at scale.

Phase 4

Implementing holistic sizing policies and procedures

Education is crucial in ensuring that an introduced sizing system is deployed correctly. Training staff on measuring customers correctly or explaining a garment's sizing with clarity and accuracy to inform shoppers in detail on sizing and fit is extremely helpful for elevating the fit experience.

Personalizing the online sizing experience on a per garment basis

Brands can provide a bespoke sizing experience that elevates the retail journey for shoppers by taking into account:

- Personal fit preferences
- Fabric/material properties
- Individual garment specifications
- Unique customer body measurements

Ensure that the solution your brand implements takes the above into account for a granular approach to fit and sizing. For example, Bold Metrics' AI solutions require just a few shopper inputs to accurately predict over 50 unique body measurements and generate a detailed 3D body model. This information is ingested with technical garment specifications such as material stretch and fabric properties on a per-style basis to ensure size recommendation accuracy that can be effectively deployed both in-store and online.

SUSTAINABILITY

A data-led sizing strategy can improve sustainability efforts at scale by quantifiably reducing returns and improving product fit from the design stage to reduce textile waste and excess production. A significant amount of apparel returns could be diverted from landfills by addressing sizing effectively.

In 2021, the total US eCommerce apparel returns due to fit resulted in approximately...

- 1,043,481 tons of CO₂⁷
- 168,337 tons of landfill waste⁶

For context, if the entirety of the US Apparel Industry used a sizing solution like Bold Metrics... **53,868 tons** of landfill waste would be diverted. Which is the equivalent of around **344,754,841 shirts** not ending up as trash.

⁷ "The hidden environmental cost of your free holiday returns" The Guardian, January 2020

CONCLUSION

A critical fit and sizing implementation strategy involves collecting and analyzing data, developing a consistent system, implementing fit and sizing policies and procedures, and providing consumer resources.

By implementing these best practices and focusing on providing accurate sizing information and a range of size options, apparel brands and retailers can improve the fit and sizing of their garments and enhance the shopping experience for consumers. This, in turn, reduces fit-related returns and increases customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Apparel brands looking to build resilience and grow in the midst of a challenging retail environment need to implement a viable sizing strategy early on for the best success.

WHY BOLD METRICS

CUSTOMERS FIRST



INCREASE CONVERSION



REDUCE RETURNS



DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS



SCALABLE SOLUTIONS



IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY



BOLD METRICS
Unlock the Power of Body Data

With a suite of powerful AI solutions that cater to the needs of apparel businesses from custom clothiers to SMEs, multi-brand retailers, and enterprise-level companies, Bold Metrics unlocks the power of body data to help brands reduce returns, boost conversion and generate valuable data-backed insights that optimize operations from design to distribution. [Find out more at boldmetrics.com](https://boldmetrics.com)

Trusted by:





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