



# Traveling the world for Levi Strauss & Co.

*Note: We asked Amy Leonard Emery, '86, if she would be willing to give Connections an interview, and we sent her a few preliminary questions. Her replies to those questions were so eloquent and detailed that we decided to use what she wrote and let her tell her story in her own words. — Cathy Jelsing*

**M**y job takes me all over the world. Each day is a lesson in geography, history, politics, commodity futures — oil and cotton — and supply and demand.

As senior vice president of product management for Levi Strauss Americas, I oversee a group of about 120 people who globally develop and source raw materials and finished product. The finished goods we deliver for Levi's® are sold in North, Central and South America.

I think I have the best job in the company, which is funny because there are a lot of people you couldn't pay enough to come anywhere near supply chain.

Supply chain is about transforming raw materials into a finished product and delivering that product to an end

consumer. It's about problem solving, working up to 18 months ahead and strategizing with key business partners.

As a company, Levi's® sources its product from about 45 countries. My team works with designers, merchandisers, mills and contractors to determine things like fit, fabrics and washes. And we're responsible for delivering the end product to distribution centers that serve Levi's® stores and wholesale accounts like JCPenney, Kohl's, J. Crew and Macy's.

## *It started at Minot State*

I had never heard of supply chain until I was working in it. As a student at Minot State University, our Business Administration Club made road trips to visit businesses in Denver and

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Minneapolis. The wheels in my head really started turning on those trips. Clearly, there was more to business than keeping ledgers and filling orders, and it made me curious about what I could do with a business degree.

After graduating in 1986, I moved to the East Coast and began work on a master's in business administration. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to keep up with my fellow students who had attended much bigger and more prestigious schools, but it wasn't a problem at all. I held my own in economics and management classes. In my business ethics class, however, I realized I was a little too fresh off the turnip truck to know what went on

in the real world, so I finished my first year of graduate school and moved to New York City to see what that real world was all about. From there, hard work and curiosity took over. I've been off and running ever since.

I spent two years as marketing services manager for Revlon, Inc. and the next 14 working for Gap, Inc. I was vice president of sourcing services in 2004, when I took a similar position with J. Jill Group. In August 2006, I went to work for Levi Strauss.

It's fun being part of a company that has its roots in San Francisco. Levi's® has a long, deep history — more than 150 years — and working side by side with fifth- and sixth-

generation descendants of Levi Strauss is kind of amazing.

### *Doing business abroad*

I've seen a lot of change in my 20 years of travel to places like Hong Kong, China, Turkey and Vietnam. With trade agreements, globalization, and global increases in consumer spending, the world has changed dramatically. In the '90s, when I worked for Gap, Inc., we made product in countries like Italy, Greece, Malta, Portugal, Scotland and Madeira. Two of the countries I've been working with more recently are Haiti and Nicaragua.

No matter where I am, the best part of the job remains the same: getting to work with people from all over the world from all walks of life — from those who sweep the factory floors to the owners of large mills and multinational operations. India is probably my favorite country. The food, colors, warmth of the people and music are something I look forward to every time I go.

Typically, when I'm traveling for work, I don't take time to see the sites. I'm usually either too tired, or I'm too eager to get home to my husband, Michael, and our kids, Robert, 13, and Edward and Estelle, 11. Although I've seen some great things, like the Taj Mahal and the Great Wall of China, what I enjoy most is spending time in small local shops and restaurants and learning a few words of the local language.

### *Worldwide altruism*

Giving back to the community is a big part of the LS&Co. culture. I have





the honor of serving on the board of directors of the Levi Strauss Foundation, which strives to create positive change in communities around the world where our employees and contractors live and work. In my travels, I've seen firsthand the impact of our HIV/AIDS education programs, asset building and workers' rights initiatives.

Levi's® recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of its annual Community Day. Inspired by Levi's® 501, Community Day usually takes place May 1. Levi's® employees in more than 40 countries spend the day volunteering in their communities. This year, I did some gardening at a site in San Francisco that provides services to abused and neglected children and teens.

I also belong to one of Levi's® ongoing Community Initiative Teams. Our CIT focuses on women and children in San Francisco. Each spring, our team makes a Mother's Day meal for the moms and their kids at a family shelter. We create the menu and do all the shopping and prep. It feels great!

Most of my personal volunteer efforts, since our children were born, have been through their school. They attend San Francisco Friends School, which combines academics with Quaker values. From the time they enter kindergarten, students are expected to do volunteer work and community outreach. It's given our family many opportunities to help others, from picking up trash in the neighborhood to collecting school supplies for teachers in Afghanistan. It's an important reminder for all of us that we are fortunate to have a family, to have a home and to know where our next meal is coming from.

### *Looking toward the future*

My job description also includes finding ways to build sustainability in all we do. Our company controls only about 5 percent of the total carbon footprint a pair of jeans leaves on the environment. The balance of the impact is either in the growing of cotton or in consumers' use and care of the product.

We're partnering with other major cotton users — like British retailer Marks & Spencer and international home products retailer IKEA — on the Better Cotton Initiative. Through the initiative, we're helping farmers in less-developed countries understand how better farming techniques can result in higher yields and healthier crops and how improved working conditions can make farming operations more socially and economically sustainable.

To address sustainability from a consumer perspective, we've changed the care labels in all our garments. It's sounds simple,

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but telling people to wash in cold water, tumble dry low or use a clothesline can have a significant impact on the environment. We're also asking consumers to donate their used jeans to Goodwill® instead of throwing them in the landfill. The average person throws out 68 pounds of clothing each year. Simply donating to Goodwill® creates jobs, and what can't be sold as secondhand is recycled into rags and used for insulation and other products.

### *Back to the harvest*

Right now, the most difficult challenge I'm managing is the global cotton shortage. Increased demand in China and India, a decrease in production as farmers worldwide plant more food crops and the impact of global warming have reduced the availability of cotton. The short supply is driving up prices. To insure Levi's® has all the fabric it needs, we're leveraging key relationships to secure our position with the mills. There's a lot of uncertainty. I won't be resting easy until late fall, when we know how the harvest comes out.

