How to Estimate Uniform Quantities for a Growing Team

Why Accurate Ordering Matters

Getting the right number of uniforms for a growing workforce is not just about having enough shirts to go around. It affects budget planning, stock management, and employee satisfaction. Order too few and you risk staff being without proper attire during a busy period. Order too many and you tie up capital in unused inventory. For companies that supply custom company uniforms, understanding how to project needs for a team that is expanding can prevent these common headaches.

Growth often happens in uneven spurts. A department might double in size over a few months, while another stays steady. Estimating quantities requires a method that accounts for both current headcount and realistic hiring plans. This article walks through the practical steps to calculate uniform orders that keep pace with your team's development without waste.

Step 1: Audit Your Current Uniform Pool

Before you can plan for new hires, you need a clear picture of what you already have. Walk through your storage area or distribution records and count how many pieces of each uniform item are currently in use or held as backup. Include everything from polo shirts and trousers to outerwear and caps. Note the sizes and conditions of each item. This baseline tells you how many garments are already allocated and how many spares are on hand.

Pay attention to items that are worn or damaged beyond reasonable use. A shirt with a frayed collar or a pair of trousers with a broken zip is not a usable resource. Setting those aside gives you a realistic count of what can actually be issued to current staff. This step also reveals which sizes are overrepresented or underrepresented in your existing stock, which is valuable information for the next order.



What to watch for

- Incomplete sets: a new hire needs a full set, not just a top or bottom.

- Seasonal differences: heavier uniforms for cooler months may need separate tracking.
- Employee turnover: staff who left may have returned uniforms that need cleaning and inspection before reissue.

Step 2: Project Your Workforce Growth

Look at your company's hiring plans for the next six to twelve months. This information usually comes from human resources or department heads. If your organisation typically adds staff in batches, note the expected timing of those hires. A uniform order that arrives three months after the new employees start is not helpful. Align your order schedule with the anticipated arrival dates of new team members.

Be realistic about attrition. Even in a growing company, some employees leave. A healthy estimate for replacement stock covers both natural turnover and the occasional uniform that gets lost or damaged. A common approach is to add a percentage buffer on top of your projected headcount. The exact number depends on your industry and turnover rate, but a 10 to 15 percent cushion is a reasonable starting point for many businesses.

Consider also that growth might not be uniform across all roles. Sales teams, warehouse staff, and office personnel may have different uniform needs. Break down your projections by department or function to avoid ordering equal quantities for groups that will not grow at the same pace.

What to watch for

- Hiring freezes or slowdowns can change projections quickly. Build flexibility into your order by working with a supplier that allows adjustments within a reasonable window.
- Seasonal peaks, such as a holiday rush, can temporarily increase headcount. Decide whether those temporary staff need full uniforms or limited items like branded T-shirts.

Step 3: Determine the Size Breakdown

Once you know how many uniforms you need, the next question is what sizes to order. A generic size chart is not enough; you need data that reflects your actual workforce. If you already have uniform records, use them to calculate the percentage of each size currently in use. Apply those percentages to your projected headcount. For a new department or a rapidly growing team, you can use industry averages or data from similar roles in your company.

It is wise to order a slightly higher proportion of medium and large sizes, as these tend to be the most common across diverse workforces. Extra small and extra large sizes should be ordered in smaller quantities, as they fit fewer people. However, do not skip the extremes entirely. A single employee who cannot get a uniform that fits will feel overlooked, and that affects morale.

For companies that supply apparel for larger staff groups, a size run that covers the full range with a moderate overstock on the middle sizes is a practical strategy. This approach reduces the chance of having to place a rush order for a single size later.



Step 4: Factor in the Minimum Order Quantity

Most uniform suppliers operate with a minimum order quantity per design or per colour. This number can range from a few dozen to several hundred pieces, depending on the garment and the printing method. When you are ordering for a growing workforce, you might be tempted to

order the minimum to keep costs low. But that can backfire if you need to place multiple small orders as you hire, each incurring setup fees and shipping costs.

Calculate the total number of uniforms you will need over the next twelve months, including the buffer for turnover. Compare that with the supplier's minimum order. If your projected need is well above the minimum, you can place one larger order and save on per-unit costs. If your need is close to or below the minimum, consider whether you can combine orders with another department or extend the timeline to accumulate a larger quantity.

What to watch for

- Some suppliers offer tiered pricing where the unit cost drops at higher quantities. Ordering slightly above the minimum can sometimes unlock a better price.
- Custom embroidery or screen printing often has a separate minimum per colour or design element. Keep your design simple to avoid hitting a higher threshold.

Step 5: Plan the Delivery Schedule

Uniforms that arrive too early sit in storage and take up space. Uniforms that arrive too late leave new hires in ill-fitting or unbranded clothing. Work with your supplier to set a delivery date that matches the onboarding schedule of your new staff. If you are ordering for a large batch of new hires who all start on the same day, request delivery at least two weeks before that date. This gives you time to inspect the garments, sort them by size, and handle any discrepancies.

For rolling hires, where new people join every few weeks, consider a phased delivery. Order the bulk of the uniforms upfront for the projected headcount, but ask the supplier to hold some stock and release it in smaller batches. Not every supplier offers this service, but it is worth asking. It reduces the amount of inventory you need to store and keeps the uniforms fresh.

What to watch for

- Production lead times can vary by season and by garment complexity. A simple printed T-shirt might take two weeks, while a custom embroidered jacket could take six. Factor this into your timeline.
- Shipping delays, especially for international orders, can throw off your schedule. Build in a buffer of at least one week beyond the quoted lead time.

Step 6: Secure Purchase Approval and Set Reorder Triggers

Once you have your quantities, size breakdown, and delivery schedule, prepare a clear purchase request for management approval. Include the rationale behind each number: the

current inventory count, the projected hires, the buffer for turnover, and the supplier's minimum order. A well-documented request is more likely to be approved quickly.

After the order is placed, set up a system to track uniform usage and stock levels. This can be as simple as a spreadsheet or as sophisticated as an inventory management module in your HR system. The goal is to know when you are running low on a particular size or item. Set a reorder point, for example, when your stock of medium polo shirts falls below ten pieces. This prevents last-minute scrambles and ensures that new hires always have uniforms ready.



Keeping Pace with Growth

Estimating uniform quantities for a growing workforce is a balancing act. You want enough stock to cover new hires and turnover, but not so much that you are left with boxes of unused garments. The steps outlined here, auditing current stock, projecting headcount, determining size breakdown, factoring in minimum orders, planning delivery, and setting reorder triggers,

give you a repeatable process. Each time you go through it, you will refine your estimates based on what worked and what did not.

For businesses that manage apparel for larger staff groups, this structured approach reduces waste and ensures that every employee, from the newest hire to the longest-serving team member, has a uniform that fits and represents the company well. It is a practical way to support growth without letting uniform management become a bottleneck.