

Heart and SOLE

Bata has built an extensive global footprint in more than 90 countries that continues to grow. The company is a major supporter of local industry and has brought this mentality to numerous locations around the world.

Images by Danielle Libine

Following his education in the UK and France, Jack Clemons, Group CEO of Bata, started his career with Deloitte, heading up the technology practice for Europe. He was then COO of a European private-equity-backed e-commerce platform where he was able put what he learned and preached at Deloitte into practice. “We grew quite fast internationally, prepared for an IPO, made a lot of acquisitions, and had the challenge of integration.

“I then joined Bata in 2006 and was appointed Group CEO in 2012. Bata has been around for 120 years and in that time it has had very few CEOs; you can count them on one

hand, so it’s a huge privilege for me to be a member of that group. I also preside over the not-for-profit children’s foundation. So I’m the president for that, which organises children-focused activities in over 60 countries around the world, where we run schools, orphanages, and many other activities that focus on children.”

Since his appointment to CEO, Jack has seen the European market go through some capricious conditions, creating subdued markets across the region. “The biggest challenge has been developing and evolving the European business to be able to deal with the volatile economic environment. We needed clear leadership and a sense of urgency in a very rapidly evolving European retail landscape, which has also been heavily impacted by the increasing role of e-commerce in footwear. We’ve been able to develop a new management team with new skills, given them a clear vision of what we wanted to do, and we built that team and the priorities we have in Europe around that new economic

environment and the importance of e-commerce in that.”

While Europe has presented some challenging conditions, emerging markets, particularly in Asia, offer Bata the chance to expand its reach and capacity. “We are very much the number one footwear player in most of the Asian markets, particularly India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, which is, in itself, a region with over 2 billion people and where the middle class is developing very rapidly.

“One of the big growth drivers for us in that region is the change in the status of women, who are beginning to go to work, beginning to earn a living, and beginning to move outside of their homes. So they’re no longer staying at home and buying just one or two slippers per year; they’re going out to work and buying three, four, five pairs of shoes to go to work, every year. That is a key driver of our business and a huge opportunity for the future.”

Bata prides itself on creating high-quality shoes that are >



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- Jack Clemons

and durable, affordable, and are driven by the markets' desires. “One part of our ethos is that we go where our customers are and we develop shoes that fit our customers' needs, even if those needs are very different. I think that's a key part of our ethos—we're absolutely focused on our customers' needs, as opposed to trying to impose some kind of standard product on them.

“Another key part of our ethos, which has been part of Bata for the past 120 years, is the respect we have as an organisation for our employees, as well as the countries and regions we work in. Taking Africa as an example, in Kenya our goal is not to maximise the profit we can take out of Kenya; but is to ensure that Kenya, as a country, and Kenyans within that country benefit from Bata's presence in that country.

“We build shoes in Kenya, employing local people. We source local materials in Kenya

and employ even more local people. We have the largest retail network in Kenya, again employing local people and ensuring that our shoes are available where the people live and work. We also use our business in Kenya to finance infrastructure, where we build and run schools. We have a strong culture, and have had for many years, of voluntary work and personal commitment of our employees to helping and supporting the local community.”

Bata is a truly international company that works closely with its numerous branches to develop best practice across the organisation. “Our vision is to make great shoes accessible to everyone. We launched that vision in 2012 when I became CEO of the organisation. To launch that vision, we had 100 people from all over the world meeting in Marrakech over several days. We spent several days with those people, talking through the

challenges, talking through what we needed to do, what we needed to change to be able to make that vision a reality, and then looking at how best to structure ourselves to deliver that.

“On an ongoing basis, and to ensure that all of our people can understand the way forward, I travel very extensively. To give you an indication, in 2013 I was in 31 countries throughout the world and that is 90 per cent of my time outside my home country of Switzerland. It is a significant effort to do that each year and on an ongoing basis, but it's massively repaid by us being able to make decisions on the ground. We pride ourselves on being able to take the decisions we make in place, with our teams, in the local market. It allows us to make those decisions quickly and decisively, and build the relationships that we need to have across the organisation to have confidence in each other, which is always necessary, particularly when difficult decisions arise.”

Bata collaborates closely with its key suppliers to ensure the quality of its offering. “In the past, Bata worked with well over 1,000 tier-one suppliers and a very high number of tier-two suppliers. Today, we realise it is key to have strategic partnerships with a much lower number of core suppliers; that provides stability and transparency as to what we want to purchase and commit to over 12 months, and allows our suppliers to build the capacity that fits our business.

“We work with our suppliers to develop total quality management standards and ensure that they understand what we need for them to work to our quality and social standards; so we give them support, we give them training, we give them clear standards as to what we require, and we put in third-party auditing against the standards that we set. We are now also building direct relationships with tier-two suppliers, so we're able to know them and

understand where all the components and materials for our shoes are sourced.”

Jack believes the organisation has a fantastic future ahead of it. “Today, we have close to 6,000 stores in 90 countries around the world, which makes our retail network pretty unique. Wherever you go in the world, however far into countries—even into the most remote areas of Africa, Asia, or Latin America—that you go, you can still find and be close to a Bata store, so we are present all over the world.

“We're present in the markets with the largest populations in the world—markets like India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, China, Pakistan, and Kenya. In most of these markets, we are the market leader, and in all of these markets, in fact, in all emerging markets, the population is quite young and expanding. In particular, the middle class is growing very quickly both in terms of number



and in terms of disposable income. Also, the number of women buying shoes is expanding very quickly. These are all very strong structural drivers for our business, so, from a structural perspective we are very confident in growth for our business in the future.”

“MESCOT has been working with BATA for several years and is impressed by the professionalism and efficiency from their team. With their new systematic management and strategies, we are looking forward to doing more business with BATA in the future.” - Mr Funian Ge, President, Mescot



BELLE INTERNATIONAL THE LEADING FOOTWEAR AND SPORTSWEAR RETAILER IN CHINA

Established in Hong Kong in 1978, Belle International is now the leading footwear and sportswear retailer in China. Every day, Belle's network of more than 18,000 stores in China, Hong Kong, and Macau helps hundreds of thousands of sophisticated consumers satisfy their sense of style.

Belle has five world-standard production bases China, producing more than 30 million pairs of footwear annually, ensuring an extensive network of up-to-the minute styles to suitably satisfy the demands of worldwide fashion.

Belle has also established strategic international partnerships with renowned brands like BATA, giving highly anticipated exposure to their footwear and sportswear across China.



SHOE DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Since MESCOT's establishment in 1983, it has developed into an international company specialising in shoe design and manufacturing.

MESCOT takes fashion, comfort, and quality as its core values. MESCOT has worked in partnership with over 50 companies from countries

including Italy, France, Spain, UK, Germany, and Russia.

MESCOT is a manufacturer with several advanced and systematical production lines, equipped with a strong and powerful production management team. The R&D team is our most professional team ever which sources Italian designs

to fulfill a more attractive and successful collection each season. The 50-people quality control team one of the most significant elements of the MESCOT, and meets our core value for MESCOT to create products of the highest quality.

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