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The CEO Magazine
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RIGHT ON Trend

European fashion retail chain Lindex is well known for its inspiring stylish selection and long-term commitment to sustainability.

Images courtesy of Lindex

In 1954, two Swedish gentlemen founded a lingerie brand that would go on to impact the lives of women all over Europe. Ingemar Boman and Bengt Rosell opened Fynd in Alingsås, which was later acquired by Lindex and developed into the popular clothing brand it is today. The business boasts women's and children's ranges with more than 480 stores in the Nordic countries, the Baltic states, Russia, Central Europe, and the Middle East. This is complemented by its online presence in all of the European countries.

Ingvar Larsson was appointed as CEO of Lindex in June last year. Prior to that he held various positions within the company including design and purchasing director, and country manager for Sweden. Despite being quite new to the role, he has extensive

experience in the industry and is committed to leading the business in a positive direction.

"The most important part is to ensure we are relevant in our fashion offering to our customers," Ingvar says. "Then there are the other very important areas, which include expansion and entering new markets. We want to grow to some extent in our existing markets and also expand to more countries outside of the Nordic region. Something else we have been working on since 2007 is e-commerce and online retailing. We have worked very hard to combine the stores with the e-commerce side of things. Having that avenue as something extra for our customers is very important. We need to be able to facilitate and inspire our customers with our fashion offering no matter if it's in the store, on a mobile phone, or on the home computer."

Ingvar's entire career has been spent in the retail sector, working across a variety of different countries and cultures. The number one thing he has learned is to be a good listener and to always believe in people. "In all the different markets I have worked in as a leader, I haven't needed to change the way I operate," he says. "I think the best outcome is if everybody feels involved and if everybody takes responsibility for their tasks. Lindex is a value-driven company. Also, in the companies I have worked for previously it has been very natural for me to have clear and strong values which I share with my team. By doing this you have much more fun and therefore it also results in a better outcome.

"I think those values are something that all companies can benefit from, but in the fashion retail industry it is of extra importance. It's a fast-moving business and it is >

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constantly evolving. The environment around us is changing and we really have to look forward in all we do and be clear about our expectations.”

Lindex sets high expectations on its employees, who are given great opportunities to develop their skills and careers within the company. There are over 100

internal positions in more than 20 countries, opening the doors up to numerous opportunities. All staff members connect as a team to look after the customer and deliver the best shopping experience possible.

Ingvar says Lindex has a core set of beliefs that are paramount to its operations. At the end of autumn 2014 it updated and revitalised its ethos to better suit its future direction. The business tries to keep things simple and to not over complicate anything for its staff. “We talk about doing things together as a team—empowering ourselves and each other. The fashion business is a changing environment and is very fast moving. Everything we do is based on trying to find the best solution for our customers in every situation that might occur.”

Lindex experienced a major growth period from the start of the new millennium. It expanded into new markets and became more of an internationally

recognised brand. The first store opening outside of the Nordic region was Estonia, followed by the Czech Republic and then Lithuania. The e-commerce business in Sweden also started to pick up and Lindex was acquired by Stockmann Group—a publicly listed company in Finland—in 2007.

“With that support and ownership we then entered Russia in 2008, Slovakia in 2009, and Poland in 2010,” Ingvar says. “This year we will open our first store in the UK. That is my plan to really go to the western parts of Europe and to really strong fashion cities like London. We have also opened franchise stores in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.”

A major focus for Lindex is sustainability. From the initial design to the recycling of clothing when it is no longer wearable, Lindex has every part of the process covered. The business considers the impact it has on the environment and



treats its employees and factory workers with respect. It seeks to drive change and to make a real difference within the industry. It is dedicated to creating better lives, better processes and better behaviours. Top priorities include: improving conditions for people linked to the business and within surrounding communities; using sustainable practices in regard to design, products, stores, office operations, production and supply chain; and educating, interacting, collaborating and sharing knowledge with customers, suppliers, partners, and other stakeholders to lead to a healthier planet.

The company works hard to promote projects which encourage the responsible use and treatment of water, minimise any wasted fabric, and promote initiatives for worthwhile causes. Some of these have included the fight against breast cancer, the HER Project to improve women’s health in Asia, supporting schools in Bangladesh that educate underprivileged

children, and collaborating with WaterAid to help people living in underdeveloped countries.

“This act of sustainability is very important,” Ingvar says. “We need to work together with our suppliers and other partners and have a clear customer focus there. We all must share the same views in terms of what our values are. We need them to understand our business and what the most important things are to us. This understanding takes time to build, and then develops into a strong relationship which is key. It’s very valuable to have suppliers and other retail partners who understand our business and share the same views on how we can succeed now and in the future.

“For us, sustainability is about much more than just focusing on the fabrics or the use of sustainable materials. That is just one part of the circle. We start by always working with the design and purchasing department in order to find out the best way to make the



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products in a sustainable way. Then we look at the design stage and we have education and training programs in place for our staff so that they always have sustainability in their minds during the production of each item or product. We want our processes to have as little effect on the environment as possible. So that’s where we start and then we move onto the fabrics.

“We have very clear goals. We have said that by 2020 we are going to have 100 per cent of our cotton made from sustainable sources. By 2020 we will also have 80 per cent of all our products made from sustainable materials, including things such as recycled fabrics. The same goes with our suppliers. We are always finding ways to support them so that the production is environmentally friendly and sustainable.”

Lindex often collaborates with celebrities and famous faces to further build its reputation as a leading fashion brand. Stylist Rachel Zoe, actress Reese Witherspoon, designer Jean Paul Gaultier, and fashion brand Missoni have all released collections. The retailer aims to offer a world-class fashion experience that is fresh, simple, and contemporary while still being at an affordable price point. Its future looks bright as it continues to look after its people, processes, customers, and the planet. •

DHL and Lindex in Supply Chain Partnership

“DHL is proud to be a true supply chain partner for Lindex providing multiple services across our divisions globally and supporting their business growth into new international markets.”

Ulf Nilsson,
CEO, DGF Sweden

“Ongoing dialogue between DHL and Lindex has been fostered through shared values towards sustainability and a passion for acting responsibly in the countries in which we operate.”

Linda Bergsten,
DGF Head of Green Services



“Continuous improvement is a significant part of our relationship; increasing container utilisation by 5–10 per cent in Lindex’s key origins has delivered both cost and environmental impact reduction.”

Steve Murray,
VP International Supply Chain, EMEA



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