

FN MILESTONE

SCHWARTZ & BENJAMIN @ 90

POETIC LICENSING

Schwartz & Benjamin has successfully navigated the challenging — and ever-changing — footwear business over the last 90 years, with an artful approach to licensing and a commitment to employee engagement.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SCHWARTZ & BENJAMIN

DANNY'S DRIVE

Q&A

For Schwartz & Benjamin's CEO, the big anniversary serves as fuel for moving forward.

BY JACQUELYN LEWIS

Danny Schwartz is enthusiastic about commemorating Schwartz & Benjamin's 90th year, but the company CEO and third-generation footwear executive is hardly nostalgic.

"I want to celebrate all the milestones we've hit throughout the years, [but I also] want people to see that we are a modern, vibrant company," he said. "Maybe we are looking back [for a moment], but it really is all about going forward."

Indeed, New York-based Schwartz & Benjamin has set its sights on the future with a sharpened focus. Its strategy centers on streamlining product offerings and working with its existing partners that already have an international presence or the potential to go global.

To that end, the company recently inked a licensing deal with Derek Lam, which launched with footwear for spring '13 and will continue with the introduction of the diffusion line 10 Crosby Derek Lam this fall.

"We expect substantial growth for all our current brands," said Barbara Schwartz, director of product development and wife of Danny. "Each one is poised for expansion in all categories of footwear."

Other shoe labels under the company's umbrella include Diane von Furstenberg, Rebecca Minkoff and Seven for All Mankind's women's offerings, as well as Kate Spade New York, which also will add footwear under sister line Kate Spade Saturday starting this fall.

But maintaining success doesn't just hinge on current business — it's also about the brands no longer on the books.

Earlier this year, the Schwartz & Benjamin



Danny Schwartz,
Barbara Schwartz
and Steve Shapiro

team parted ways with one of its licensors, Juicy Couture, and closed in-house label Daniblack. In 2013, it also ended its short-lived joint venture with contemporary label Matiko. All three moves were aimed at homing in on the company's strongest assets.

"Right now, less is more," said Schwartz & Benjamin President Steve Shapiro.

"You have to make a conscious effort to watch all the development that you make and the products that you go into, and to not spread yourself too thin," Schwartz added, reiterating that both he and Shapiro continue to take inspiration from the late Apple mogul

Steve Jobs, whose biography they've praised several times in previous interviews. "If you have fewer products, you can devote more time to engineering each one of those to be the best it can be. We think we can do a better job of focusing on key patterns. We are working hard at that and we've improved."

The firm's licensors and other partners say the formula works.

"Schwartz & Benjamin has been an essential part of our company's growth," said designer Rebecca Minkoff, who introduced footwear to her eponymous label in 2010 and signed a production deal with Schwartz & Benjamin in ➤

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◀ 2011. “They are great, collaborative business partners.”

In addition to its branded lines, Schwartz & Benjamin also has a thriving, 4-year-old private-label business that creates footwear for a handful of large clients. “It’s a nice way of diversifying the company [in a way that ensures] we don’t compete with ourselves,” Shapiro said. “It’s a different arena, and we are meeting with great success [in that division].”

Here, Danny Schwartz sounds off on measuring success, the significance of 90 and what the next decade might bring.

What does the 90th anniversary of Schwartz & Benjamin mean to you?

DS: We’ve had a very long history of manufacturing, importing, designing and delivering products that satisfy all the needs of our licensors, our wholesale clients and the consumers’ needs. There aren’t that many companies in our industry that hit 90 and are privately owned.

To what do you attribute the company’s longevity?

DS: First and foremost, it is that we are very serious about the jobs we take on. It comes down to the job that we do and the products we are delivering. Then, I would say [we’ve been successful because] we treat people the way they would like to be treated. We try to live by the golden rule. It’s not that difficult to be nice to people, and we also don’t believe that nice guys finish last. We work hard and keep our heads down and keep focused on what we are trying to do.

Where would you like to see Schwartz & Benjamin at 100?

DS: In 2023, I see a bigger, more diversified

version of the company you see today — still a great place to work where our employees are productive, but continue to laugh a lot. In 10 years, I see a younger, vibrant management team — perhaps including the fourth generation — leading us to new successes.

Do you envision the company remaining privately held, or would you consider an acquisition as you look toward the future?

DS: We’ll probably make it to 100 [as a family-owned firm]. We’ve spoken to companies through the years that were interested in acquiring us or merging us into their organizations. We never say never, but I don’t know if that will ever come to pass for us. We like to believe we are very nimble because we’re private. We don’t have to have board meetings, and we can put our heads together and make decisions pretty quickly.

What plans are on the horizon for the more immediate future?

DS: We’re ratcheting up the intensity and expanding our international businesses with each of [our existing] brands. We also just got



the green light to sell Kate Spade in Europe, and the U.K. [will be] our first endeavor. We sell to a lot of Kate Spade stores in Japan, too, but we’re close to announcing a [plan] to open some [shop-in-shops] in department stores [there]. We have a pretty strong Diane von Furstenberg business in Europe and we are looking to expand that as well.

What is your personal definition of success?

DS: There can be different kinds of success. Personal success for me has been achieved by marrying Barbara and raising two wonderful children. Success in business is sometimes measured by who has more money at the end of the day. While we always want to be profitable and we compete every day to achieve that goal, I believe we also are successful due to the way we work, how we deal with our employees, our clients [and] our collaborators. That is measured by what others think about you and your organization, [so] you’ll have to ask the industry if they think we are successful. We still have many goals that we would like to accomplish. ➤

“We’re ratcheting up the intensity and expanding our international businesses with each of [our existing] brands.”

— Danny Schwartz

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◀ **Your growth strategy is centered on your existing partners, but what attributes do you look for when you add a new label?**

DS: It has changed over the years. We have some criteria we like to use, but sometimes we break our own rules. What's happened today, with the profile of footwear — really since “Sex & the City” and the emergence of brands like Manolo Blahnik, Christian Louboutin and Jimmy Choo — is that the profile of footwear is so large that everybody is doing shoes. You walk down a major avenue in a major city and practically every [retailer] has [an in-house label for] shoes. The companies that have been in the shoe business have expanded the number of lines they produce. Ready-to-wear companies that meet with some success love to expand by getting into handbags and shoes. Ten or 20 years ago, buyers would line up when you came out with a new license, but today they don't get so excited because they don't need another line of shoes. Oftentimes they'll tell you, “We have trouble funding the lines that are doing well now in our stores.”

[Because of that], we are very particular. One thing we will look at, for example, is if a ready-to-wear company has 30-plus of their own stores, because then you have the possibility of having an initial business pretty much from the start. You have that instant mix of company-owned retail stores, and then you can layer on the wholesale clients. But, as I said, we break our own rules sometimes for a brand we think is about to ascend or become stronger.

Is there a certain category that looks strong right now that you're emphasizing?

DS: The market right now is reacting to casuals, so [we are deciding] how each of our brands attacks that category. There are a lot of sneakers in the marketplace, so you have to ask the question, is that category going to be saturated? What will be next? I think that designer casuals [with] some dressed-up versions will continue and will be a good adjunct. It gives our brands an opportunity to jump in there. Kate Spade and Keds have a collaboration that seems to be working. In addition to that, we are trying to infuse more casuals into the [overall] Kate Spade collection, but a little dressier, more whimsical.

What's the hardest part of juggling multiple designer labels?

DS: One of [the challenges] is making sure you don't give all your focus to the really hot brand

“The market right now is reacting to casuals, so [we are deciding] how each of our brands attacks that category.”

— Danny Schwartz



Barbara and Danny Schwartz

realistic decision we had to make. It was not performing up to our expectations and it was taking too much of our time away from brands that we should be devoting our time to. It was the right decision to make.

What are some of the biggest issues facing your company today, as well as the footwear industry at large?

DS: Sourcing is probably the biggest challenge today in our industry. We're in several different countries. We don't like to have all our eggs in one basket. You've got different problems in every country, and most of them are caused by price. You've got a euro in Europe that causes your Spanish and your Italian product to be more expensive than it could be. Even with all the turmoil that is going on in Europe today, the euro is still over the dollar. You've got labor problems in China escalating the cost of product there. In Brazil, you have an economy that has been strong for quite some time,

and not to the brand that's struggling. You have to give equal attention to all your brands so you can help each one attain the growth it should and get to the [right] volume level.

Fall '13 will be your first season without the Daniblack line. What has been the most difficult part of disbanding that label?

DS: The hardest thing for me is my friends asking me about it: “How's Daniblack doing?” They all liked the name. But listen, it was a

which has elevated their currency, so it makes it more expensive for us to buy Brazilian product. The worldwide economy is also a challenge right now. As we've taken our business from basically wholesaling our shoes in North America to selling our shoes all over the world, it has become more [complex].

Are you feeling optimistic about the market in general?

DS: I am. I think 2013 will be a good year.

Congratulations *Schwartz & Benjamin*

(No one can replace you but, for 90 years, people have wanted to fill your shoes!)



Schwartz & Benjamin's first box circa 1923,
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PRAISING PARTNERS

Some of the nation's top retailers weigh in on what makes the Schwartz & Benjamin roster so powerful.

BY GERALD FLORES

DAYNA ZIEGLER

VP of women's shoes, Saks Fifth Avenue

"Schwartz & Benjamin offers a range of brands that appeal to the Saks Fifth Avenue customer. They have a niche in the contemporary market as the go-to destination for contemporary brands. It is a strong partnership based on a strong relationship. The team is wonderful to work with and understands the needs of the business."



JULIE BUTLER

VP & DMM of ladies shoes, Neiman Marcus

"Schwartz & Benjamin and Neiman Marcus have enjoyed many years of partnership and business in ladies shoes. Having a balance of price points on our shoe floor is extremely important, and Schwartz & Benjamin offers us compelling fashion within those opening prices from an array of different designers. Their gracious hospitality and friendly atmosphere make it a pleasure for us to visit their showroom. We love their collaborative spirit



— they're always open to exploring new ideas and exclusive opportunities."

DAVID JASSEM

President, David's Shoes

"When I think about the major reason Schwartz & Benjamin has been an amazing partner for David's Shoes over the last 25 years, one word comes to mind: integrity. There is integrity in everything they do, from the product they produce to the way they treat people. One of the most unique qualities of Schwartz & Benjamin is that it is still a family-owned and -operated business. If you have an issue, you can pick up the phone and call Danny Schwartz and get it taken care of. And the family has done an incredible job of surrounding themselves

with impressive people over the years. From Eli Footer and Steve Shapiro to their designers and sales and support staff."

JENNIFER SIDARY

Couture buyer, Zappos.com

"Schwartz & Benjamin is a family business and has always treated us like family. They have supported Zappos for many years and we are very lucky to have them as friends and business partners. I'd say a big part of why we have a strong partnership is that we enjoy spending time together. It's certainly about the sales, but enjoying an incredible dinner while we are at market is what makes our relationship so special."



BILLY LAWSON

Co-owner, Shoe Inn

"They're very special people. It started with Arthur Schwartz. When I think of the Schwartz family, I think of integrity, honor and respect. They're a lovely family and [have been] a lovely company to do business with over the past 40 years. There's something about saying Schwartz & Benjamin in our industry that has a ring of honor and truth to it, and they've had some of the greatest licenses around because of that."

BRUCE HAUSMAN

President, Footnotes Inc.

"They are always concerned about the retailer and they really do everything they can to help us survive, especially in today's climate. They're very interested in our feedback to see how the shoes are selling and how they can improve next season. Schwartz & Benjamin is a real asset to our stores in New Jersey, and we hope to continue the relationship for a long time."

SCOTT MEDEN

EVP & GMM of the shoe division, Nordstrom

"As a wholesale company, Schwartz & Benjamin is a fantastic partner. [Its team is] responsive to our input and to the needs of our customers. Most important, they create great product. We carry several of the firm's brands, including Kate



Spade, Diane von Furstenberg and Rebecca Minkoff. It is one of the premier footwear licensing companies and has the unique ability — and excels at — authentically infusing a brand's aesthetic and DNA into a licensed footwear line. Our customers respond very well to that."

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GLOBAL FOOTPRINT

The firm's future success hinges on carefully plotted growth in Europe and Asia. BY JACQUELYN LEWIS

Schwartz & Benjamin has its sights set on international expansion, and its licensing approach reflects that goal.

The firm is working to create a streamlined stable of brands, joining forces with labels that already have a global presence — such as

Diane von Furstenberg or Kate Spade New York — and the emergent lines poised for global growth.

Schwartz & Benjamin President Steve Shapiro puts the firm's newest license with Derek Lam — including the diffusion line 10 Crosby Derek Lam, set to hit retail this fall — in the latter category.

"We think [that company] is going to get to the next level," Shapiro said. "Derek Lam and 10 Crosby don't have a lot of [worldwide] retail [right now], but we see a terrific growth pattern there."

Derek Lam CEO Jan-Hendrik Schlottmann noted that the label is looking forward to building its footwear category through the partnership, which kicked off last summer.

"When Derek and I started our business, we decided we only wanted to work with people who are very talented, very smart and very nice," Schlottmann said. "Danny and Barbara Schwartz, as well as Steve Shapiro and their great team, are exactly all that. ... We are happy to be in what we hope will be a very long-term relationship with Schwartz & Benjamin."

Kate Spade New York, for which Schwartz & Benjamin has held the footwear license since 2001, also is set to cover new ground. The label has long had a presence overseas, but in the next few seasons it will push the shoe division even further, adding wholesale in Europe and increasing its footprint in Asia, with preliminary plans to roll out shop-in-shops in Japanese department stores.

Diane von Furstenberg footwear also is ripe for more international growth, with Europe near the top of the list, according to Shapiro.

But even when the brand choices are solid, the licensing process itself can be challenging. Finding the right product mix and negotiating terms are complex endeavors, not to mention

that today's increased competition can put pressure on a company to snap up a hot brand without allowing adequate time to mull the pros and cons of the deal.

However, according to Shapiro, the keys to successfully navigating those hurdles are restraint and deliberately paced expansion.

"We don't rush," he said. "If we lose an opportunity [to grab a sought-after license] because we don't want to be rushed, that's OK. We'd rather make sure we have the resources to [successfully execute] the brand and satisfy the licensor. We've passed on opportunities because [the other party] wanted to move too fast."

Knowing when to drop labels that are no longer a good fit for the firm also calls for ongoing evaluations. Schwartz & Benjamin re-

support to each of our [existing] businesses so they can each win."

In fact, Schwartz & Benjamin is not actively looking for new licensors at the moment.

While Shapiro said the firm is always open to opportunities, he added that "right now, less is more. Our house is about right as far as the number of brands [under the Schwartz & Benjamin umbrella, which includes four licenses and a production partnership with Rebecca Minkoff]. We are trying to maximize what we are doing in each of our collections before we decide to expand further."

After all, what ultimately makes these partnerships work is impeccable execution, according to the executives.

"We need to give our licensors what they



"We don't rush. If we lose an opportunity [to grab a sought-after license] because we don't want to be rushed, that's OK." — Steve Shapiro

cently closed its in-house brand Daniblack and parted ways with licensor Juicy Couture in an effort to pare down and adapt to the changing fashion landscape.

"[We rely on] market feedback and our own research and knowledge of how the brand is doing as an overall category or in our specific category of footwear," Shapiro said.

CEO Danny Schwartz noted that staying open to change is a big part of the strategy.

"Flexible is a good word to describe our company," he said. "We have to be careful about how many brands we have. We need to make sure we are not spreading ourselves too thin, and that we are giving the proper amount of

need to accessorize [their other categories]," Schwartz said, "but we also need a product that fits their DNA and can sell [as a standalone product] in a department store. We get into the heads of our brands. We listen to their design directors and take on whatever themes they are doing for the upcoming season. Each has a strategy for the segment they want to attack, and we listen to that. We like the fact that when the merchants come through our office, they see that each one of our brands has its own distinct look."

"If you look at what we have today, they all serve different purposes in the market," Shapiro added. "Danny calls it 'licensing 101.'"

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SAVVY STEPS

For nine decades, Schwartz & Benjamin has led the industry with its licensing model and reaped the rewards.

BY WAYNE NIEMI

1923 — Company is founded by Benjamin Schwartz and Benjamin Benjamin and the partners open a shoe factory in Brooklyn, N.Y., selling shoes under the Customcraft label. Eventually, the factory moves to Manhattan.

1934 — Ben Schwartz creates and directs The Shoe Club of New York, a charitable group for shoe people in need.

1946 — Ben's son, Arthur Schwartz, joins the company.

1951 — The Shoe Club merges with Two Ten Footwear Foundation. Ben Schwartz is named regional chairman of New York.

1955 — Eli Footer joins the company as a salesman and eventually becomes co-chairman in 1995.



1958 — Construction begins on factory in Lynn, Mass.

Early-1960s — The firm introduces groundbreaking Cloud 7 style.

1962 — Company enters into design collaboration with Charles Jourdan for Customcraft.

1968 — Arthur Schwartz is named president.

1969 — Phyllis Footer joins the firm on a part-time basis and is eventually made a VP of product, where she works with such designers as Donna Karan and Andrea Pfister (at right). — Company signs Yves Saint Laurent license for the U.S. and Canada, beginning a 31-year collaboration.



1970 — Givenchy taps the company as a licensee, kicking off a 12-year partnership.

1972 — Arthur Schwartz and Luigi Rossi establish

a 35-year manufacturing relationship on a handshake.

1974 — Ben Schwartz passes away. — Massachusetts shoe factory closes, and the business shifts to a predominantly licensing model as all manufacturing moves to Italy. — Firm inks deal for Anne Klein license, beginning a 33-year relationship.

1975 — Danny Schwartz, at 22 years old, joins his father in the business.

1976 — Barbara Rienzo (Schwartz) joins the company as a showroom model and receptionist.

1978 — Porsche Design men's and women's driving shoes are introduced.

1982 — Givenchy license ends.

1986 — Loran Wurdeman joins firm as controller, based in Massachusetts.

1990 — Firm adds and begins marketing the Anne Klein II brand in addition to Anne Klein.



1992 — Arthur Schwartz is inducted into Footwear News' Hall of Fame. — The A Line Anne Klein brand is added.

1993 — Danny Schwartz becomes president. — Loran Wurdeman is named CFO based in Massachusetts.

Late-1990s — Company begins importing shoes from Brazil.

1999 — Eli Footer is inducted into the FN Hall of Fame.

2000 — Steve Shapiro joins the firm as VP and division head of all Anne Klein collections. — Licensing deal inked with Michael Kors. — Gucci purchases Yves Saint Laurent and brings the YSL footwear business in-house.

2001 — Company opens new sales showroom and

product development studio on 57th Street in New York. — License agreement signed with Kate Spade New York.

2002 — Arthur Schwartz retires.

2003 — Danny Schwartz is named chairman of FFANY. — Eli Footer retires.



2005 — Firm signs licensing deal with Juicy Couture. — License for Kors by Michael Kors line begins.

2006 — Phyllis Footer is inducted into the FN Hall of Fame. — Company launches the Daniblack label.

2007 — Danny Schwartz succeeds Arthur as CEO. — Steve Shapiro is named president. — Barbara Schwartz is named director of product development. — Firm signs Diane von Furstenberg worldwide footwear license. — Licensing agreement with Anne Klein ends. — Phyllis Footer retires.

2009 — Company ends nine-year licensing partnership with Michael Kors. — Seven for All Mankind inks licensing deal.

2011 — Danny Schwartz receives A.A. Bloom Award from Two Ten. — Danny again becomes chairman of FFANY. — Firm enters into a production agreement with Rebecca Minkoff.



2012 — Global licensing deal begins for the Derek Lam and 10 Crosby Derek Lam lines.

— Company receives the Footwear Company of the Year Award at the American Image Awards.

2013 — Firm celebrates 90th anniversary.



COVER WORTHY

Through the years, Schwartz & Benjamin's history has played out in the pages of *Footwear News*. Here, the firm grabs some headlines.



Clockwise from top left: Looks from Anne Klein take the cover on Oct. 2, 1978; Yves Saint Laurent grabs headlines on June 14, 1982, with a spectator slingback pump for spring '83; Anne Klein again receives attention on Nov. 18, 1984, with a pair of black pumps with mesh vamps; on Aug. 11, 1986, Anne Klein is back in the spotlight with Asian-inspired looks, including a black satin flat and black-and-white dotted silk wedge; a velvet pump from Yves Saint Laurent graces the cover on April 23, 1990; Yves Saint Laurent draws eyes on Oct. 14, 1996, with a woven espadrille wedge; with a slingback, peep-toe bootie, Juicy Couture locks in the cover on Jan. 12, 2009; Kate Spade is featured on the Feb. 11, 2013, issue with a red patent pump on a mid-heel.

KING ARTHUR

After decades in the industry, Arthur Schwartz still feels most at home inside a shoe factory. BY BARBARA SCHNEIDER-LEVY

For Arthur Schwartz, nothing compares to the art of making a pair of shoes. After nearly 70 years at the company his father founded, Schwartz's favorite moments have been inside a factory, solving the unique problems that come with evolving designs and aesthetics.

"I love the challenge of manufacturing," the Schwartz & Benjamin chairman said about his early days in the business.

Today, Schwartz describes his role as that of pinch hitter, watching from the sidelines as his son Danny Schwartz, CEO, and daughter-in-law Barbara Schwartz, director of product development, lead the company. And it's a vantage point he enjoys, particularly because the game has changed.

"It's so fast-paced [now]. I couldn't imagine being involved [day-to-day]," he said.

However, according to Barbara, Arthur set the pace when it came to attracting design talent. "My father-in-law has always been forward-thinking," she said. "He reached out to established, talented footwear designers to collaborate on our own brand, Customcraft, for many years. Some notable names are Arsho Baghsarian, Beth Levine, Evelyn Lipare, Mabel Julianelli, Margaret Clark Jerrold, Roland Jourdan and Sylvia Baldi. We continued footwear design collaborations for Anne Klein and Anne Klein II in the early years with Andrea Pfister, and then Manolo Blahnik, Patrick Cox, Franco Fieramosca and Reed Evins. Additionally, Bernard Figueroa was employed to collaborate on the Michael Kors collection."

Despite the changing nature of the industry — and the trend toward consolidation — Schwartz said he is proud of his firm's accomplishments and that it has managed to remain privately owned and family-run.

"The best part of being a family business is you call your own shots," said the patriarch.

Here, Schwartz recalls the best business advice his father gave him and favorite moments in fashion over a long and profitable career.

What's the most valuable lesson you learned from your father Benjamin Schwartz?

AS: Treat people decently. [For example], when [my father's former partner], Benjamin Benjamin,



A young Arthur in 1937

While in the Navy in 1944

With Eli Footer in 1972

Arthur Schwartz

decided to leave the company and go into business for himself, my father made samples for him. They loved each other.

What do you see as the company's most innovative move in the industry?

AS: We were the first to tap into the fashion intelligence of the world's best ready-to-wear designers, getting them involved in the shoe business in a serious way. We started with Givenchy, Yves Saint Laurent, Anne Klein. The idea of collaborations with ready-to-wear houses started with us.

Who have been the most influential shoe designers you've worked with?

AS: Margaret Clark Jerrold, who was married to Jerry Miller of the I. Miller family. She was a revelation, designing from a sociological point of view. She was the first to make a low-heel, comfortable

shoe to walk in. [They] were beautiful [and] exciting. She [briefly] designed for Schwartz & Benjamin when we were doing a special line for Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue called The American Collection. At that time in the 1960s, low-heel shoes were awful looking. She single-handedly [turned the look] around. It was great fun. [Another] exciting period was [our] association with Charles Jourdan. I went to France on a regular basis to work with Roland Jourdan to develop our collections.

Among the ready-to-wear designers who collaborated with Schwartz & Benjamin, who had the biggest impact?

AS: We worked for a long time with Donna Karan and Louis Dell'Olio. Donna was passionate about shoes. If Louis had put his mind to it, he could have been a shoe designer.

Which industry insider made the greatest impression on you?

AS: Burt Tansky of Neiman Marcus was very influential. A number of years ago, Danny and Barbara came up with the idea of [doing] a collaboration with Kate Spade. At the time,

Neiman Marcus owned a good stake in its [existing] business. Burt had confidence in us and asked if we would take [it] over [in order] to rebuild it, which we did.

What tops your list of memorable events?

AS: The 50th anniversary of Neiman Marcus. We were invited to come down [to Texas]. A few of us flew down on the plane with Coco Chanel. Being fêted by Neiman for their anniversary was great fun.

Schwartz & Benjamin pioneered so many looks. Which has had the largest fashion impact?

AS: [The development] of the first stretch pump called the Cloud 7. We made tons of them. We did it on two heel heights. Outwardly, it looked like a nicely cut, plain pump. It had a quality of fit that couldn't be challenged.

How has buying changed over the years?

AS: Early on, [retailers] would buy the same shoe season after season, changing [only] the colors. Every once in a while, they'd introduce a new style. [In the 1960s], the business became more [about] fashion. [Today], we have a much more fashionable [consumer]. She's younger and more sophisticated.

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is a rendezvous with dignity"*

- Benjamin D. Schwartz
First Two Ten Regional Chairman, 1951



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ELI FOOTER

Former title: Co-chairman (retired)

Years at the company: 47

Biggest change at the firm: "I started as a salesman on the road, then I became sales manager and, ultimately, Arthur Schwartz named me co-chairman of the company."

Fondest memory: "Schwartz & Benjamin encouraged territorial salesman to become very proactive in the industry [associations and organizations]. And they were very generous in donating to FFANY Shoes on Sale. That was part of the culture there."

Best part of your job: "Working with Arthur. He had a vision of manufacturing shoes under the names of clothing designers. The company's growth was really due to Arthur. He saw an opportunity that nobody else saw."

ANGELA FORLINI

Current title: Line builder

Years at the company: 14

Biggest change at the firm: "The company growth, changing offices and moving into a much larger location as we have taken on new, amazing brands."

Fondest memory: "I have grown up in Schwartz & Benjamin and learned so much from the best in the footwear business. Barbara Schwartz took me under her wing and mentored me. It has been and continues to be a very rewarding experience."

Best part of your job: "I love how family-oriented the company is and who I work with. I seem to learn something new every day."

NICOLE GINETTI

Current title: International sales

Years at the company: 18

Biggest change at the firm: "Growth in all areas: brands, staff, manufacturing, etc. We had to relocate both our showroom and design studio in New York, as well as our corporate office in Massachusetts, to allow for the expansion."

Fondest memory: "That's easy: Bob Schwartz, [Danny Schwartz's late cousin and our former director of international sales]. He took me under his wing and mentored me. He was tough and it wasn't easy, but I was so lucky to have learned from him."

Best part of your job: "Working with some wonderful people who I consider family."

BARBARA HANNIFY

Current title: Credit analyst

Years at the company: 30

Biggest change at the firm: "The newer technology that allows us to reference data quicker and that is more time-efficient."

Fondest memory: "I have always enjoyed the people I have worked with."



Angela Forlini and
Melissa Wilson

FAMILY TIES

The talented staff
of Schwartz & Benjamin
reveal what it means to
work in a family business.

BY JENNIE BELL



Clockwise from top:
Michele Prandi, Sarah
Smith and Annie Marino

Best part of your job: "The challenges in my particular position and knowing that this company will be there for you when you need it."

ANNIE MARINO

Current title: VP of sales, Derek Lam and 10 Crosby Derek Lam

Years at the company: 8

Biggest change at the firm: "Seeing all the amazing designer and hip contemporary brands that we have made shoes for in both the past and present."

Fondest memory: "Working with the wonderful owners ... and feeling like I'm a key part of the company."

Best part of your job: "Having the opportunity to work with designers, owners and their teams, as well as working with high-end stores and their buying teams."

JENNIFER MASELLA

Current title: President, Diane von Furstenberg Footwear

Years at the company: 5

Biggest change at the firm: "The growth of the e-commerce business and the balancing act done between customers that have both online and brick-and-mortar businesses."

Fondest memory: "When I brought my 3-year-old son Jack to work for the day and Barbara Schwartz went to shake his hand and he grabbed her by both cheeks and kissed her on the lips. Both of their smiles are imprinted in my mind forever."

Best part of your job: "The everyday ins and outs here at Schwartz & Benjamin are great. We are all so hands-on that every day brings a new challenge."

KELLY MITCHELL

Current title: Order processing supervisor

Years at the company: 31

Biggest change at the firm: "The length of time it takes for the orders to get to the factory from the customer. When I started here, the seller would take the orders from the customer and mail it to the office. They would then be keyed into the computer, printed off, checked and then mailed to the factory. It could take up to two weeks from the customer to the factory. Now, it could be hours from the customer to the factory."

Fondest memory: "The Christmas parties."

Best part of your job: "The atmosphere."

MICHELE PRANDI

Current title: VP of sales, Kate Spade Footwear

Years at the company: 3

Biggest change at the firm: "Our ability to implement new technology to keep up with the growing e-commerce channel."

Fondest memory: "When I began working on the 90th anniversary party and learned about the rich and diverse history that Schwartz & Benjamin embodies. I had a unique opportunity to view the archives and see some of the original shoes Schwartz & Benjamin manufactured."

Best part of your job: "Coming to work each day in our beautiful showroom space and working with such creative and motivated individuals."

ROBERT SABELLI

Current title: Controller

Years at the company: 29

Biggest change at the firm: "The transition of company leadership from Arthur to Danny. It's extraordinary that the core family values and culture of the business have remained the same while the company structure and direction have changed considerably as the footwear industry has changed."

Fondest memory: "1984 — the first time I was sent to meet the New York team, which was my first time in New York and also my first time on an airplane, at age 24. Another fond memory was our 70th anniversary celebration."

Best part of your job: "I never get tired of it. Having the opportunity to contribute is energizing and having full access to all employees, including Arthur and Danny, is a special quality that preserves the family atmosphere, which is unique in today's business environment."

SARAH SMITH

Current title: Sales manager

Years at the company: 5

Biggest change at the firm: "The exciting growth of the Kate Spade New York division that I am currently working in. There is so much buzz and demand for the brand, and footwear plays an integral part of making Kate Spade the lifestyle brand it has become."

Fondest memory: "I've had the opportunity to work on three different brands (Juicy Couture, Seven for All Mankind and Kate Spade) during my time here at Schwartz & Benjamin and have learned so much through the process. Each brand has a different personality and customer who is drawn to the product, creating many fond memories and exposing me to so many different facets of the industry."

Best part of your job: "Working with all the different global stores and online accounts. It's incredible to think that many of the stores we work with have been in business longer than Schwartz & Benjamin. There is such satisfaction in getting great product into the hands and onto the feet of millions of customers around the world."

MELISSA WILSON

Current title: Product development

Years at the company: 7

Biggest change at the firm: "Technology. I am now able to correspond face to face with our international partners by using Wifi and Skype. This is a great advantage when projects are time-sensitive and decisions need to be made quickly."

Fondest memory: "The opportunity to meet and work with amazing people and brands. In a single day, we could have Derek Lam and Diane von Furstenberg in our offices. It is exciting to be a part of so many brands with well-known designers."

Best part of your job: "The people I work with in the office on a daily basis. I am able to learn and grow by being exposed to all aspects of the footwear industry, from sales and merchandising to design. The family atmosphere helps to create an enjoyable workplace."




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STANDOUT SELLERS

Danny and Barbara Schwartz reveal the five styles that made the biggest difference over the company's 90-year history. BY WAYNE NIEMI

CUSTOMCRAFT CLOUD 7

introduced in the early 1960s

"That was an elasticized top-line pump," said Danny Schwartz. "The significance of that shoe was that it fit quite well. It was a pump that we did on all different heel heights, in all different toe shapes, in any material you could think of. The elasticized top line really made it fit snug to the foot, and that was the key. One foot is different than another. This top line allowed your feet to fit equally well [in each shoe]. It also had a nice look to it once it was on the foot."

ANNE KLEIN CARAMIA

introduced in the late 1970s

"That was designed with Donna Karan," said Danny. "Donna is a tall gal and she was looking for a chic flat. She really invented the chic flat with a little heel and a tapered toe. We sold thousands and thousands of those. And it

wasn't just tall gals wearing it. She made it into a fashion statement."

ANNE KLEIN SNAKE MOC

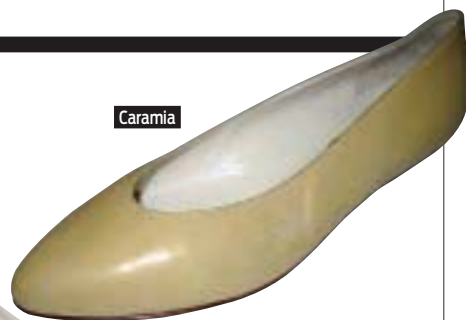
introduced in the early 1980s

"It was kind of a classic moccasin in whipsnake [leather]," Danny said. "Everybody was buying it from us. It was a style that lasted several years."

KATE SPADE KAROLINA

introduced in 2005

"The Karolina was a game changer because it stood for an identity, became a classic and looked great in every fabrication, heel and treatment we gave it," said Barbara Schwartz. "It's timeless. The Kate Spade company, as they grew, really embraced this in their stores as a signature item. They showed the consumer it was right."



CUSTOMCRAFT UNE

introduced in the early 1970s

"It was a sandal. It was our best-selling shoe at Neiman Marcus at that time, and they gave us a plaque when they sold 15,000 pairs [in 1972]. It was a two-banded sandal. It had great fitting qualities. It was broad in the toe and had a substantial heel, yet a woman could look very fashionable in it." — Danny Schwartz

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