

54 years of excellence

As he leaves the role of Chairman, these pages celebrate the history of Dixons under the outstanding leadership of Sir Stanley Kalms over the past 54 years.

To be forward-looking is the very essence of Dixons, but there are occasions when a little nostalgia, as captured in this photographic montage, may be excused. Our roots in 1948 were so modest. A small suburban store selling cameras. Yet fortune smiled with opportunity. It was the right industry at the right time. I was 16 when I became manager of my father's store, with all the energy and enthusiasm of that age.

New technology met a rising level of customer expectation and we were a diligent supplier.

But it is important to understand why the Group has been uniquely successful in a relatively short timescale, and against the background, until the mid 1980s, of extremely difficult economic and social distractions. Growth until then was truly an obstacle race. The revolution of Margaret Thatcher's support for the market economy freed the talent and resources of the Group. We revelled in the increased competition in our market. It honed our skills and invigorated our young management.

The strength of the Group lies firmly in the dynamism of our industry: optics, electronics, domestic appliances. We benefit from the classic virtuous circle; technological advances regularly creating consumer-orientated products which, combined with price deflation, open our markets to an ever-widening range of consumers.

Our contribution is the strength of our international buying and marketing and our ability to turn complex technology into attractive, consumer-friendly propositions.

Our strength lies also in the quality of our staff and the service they offer from point of purchase to post sale. Our stores are attractive and inviting and we continuously reinvent our offerings to meet the expectations of increasingly savvy and demanding customers.

Information technology has always been a major investment and we try to be at the cutting edge.

Integrity, value and social responsibility are not buzz words. They represent core values and have done since Day One in 1948. Of course we make mistakes and, occasionally, poor judgements. If we slip below our standards at times, that is the nature of man. But our fallibility is always a spur to improvement.

Above all, an intensely competitive spirit pervades the Group at every level, in every country.

At times we may be accused of arrogance. That, perhaps, is the price of sharing one overriding corporate objective: to be number one in every one of our markets, never outvalued, and never outmanoeuvred. I believe all these values to be my legacy.

Stanley Kalms

1948...



1972

With 110 stores Dixons was now a leading player in hi-fi and cameras. Own brand Prinzsound offered hi-fi perfection while Chinon delivered superb cine-camera value.



1984

The Group became the white goods market leader with its acquisition of the 613 store century-old Currys chain and Mastercare, its nationwide service organisation.



1999

The acquisition of the Nordic market leader, Elkjøp, marked the start of a wave of European expansion.

1948
A keen 16 year old Stanley Kalms, newly entrusted with the management of his father's photographic studio, persuades him that the way to profit from the new enthusiasm for photography is to sell cameras and accessories.



Early advertising targeted the families of servicemen who wanted a memento of the loved ones they'd left at home while they were in the forces.

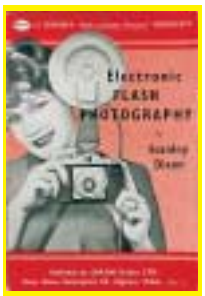


1950
Dixon Studios received its largest order for 1,000 copies of a photograph of St Catherine Labouré, who created Catholicism's most popular icon, the "Miraculous Medal".

1954
Despite "tight management" costs have risen. In 1954 the advertising budget was just £5,152, our salary bill just £7,243. In 2001/02 the salary bill was £490 million.



185 Station Road, Edgware, the first store and the nerve centre of the business.



1959
Dixons' pioneering marketing included the creation of "Stanley Dixon". His expert advice inspired novice customers to make the most of their cameras, exposure meters and to use new techniques such as "Electronic Flash Photography".



1962
With 16 branches and sales of £1.4 million, Dixons was listed on the Stock Exchange. Acquisitions in the same year added 42 stores including London's Oxford Street branch, claimed as "Europe's largest photographic centre".



1967
The acquisition of Bennett Cameras in 1964 and the success of own brands like Prinz & Pyramid, gave Dixons' 90 stores a commanding lead in the UK's photographic market.



1974
Dixons opened its 163,000 sq ft distribution centre in Stevenage, at the time the largest computerised warehouse in Europe. Today its 21 acre site provides 380,000 sq ft of warehouse space.



1982
Saisho made its debut. Hailed as one of the UK's most successful own brand launches it reflected an upmarket high tech image for hi-fi, TV and video.



1987
The annual report looked 20 years ahead to the gadgets that could furnish the home of 2007. Needless to say most of the gadgets illustrated were available in Dixons stores!



1988
John Clare was appointed Managing Director of the newly formed Dixons Stores Group, creating a common infrastructure to support the Dixons and Currys brands.

1990
A winning team for more than 30 years, the then Group Managing Director, Mark Souhami and Sir Stanley reveal the latest technology at the 1990 annual general meeting.



1994
With the roll out of PC World and The Link, the Group launched a new phase of expansion into two rapidly growing specialist markets.



1998
Launched in September 1998 Freeserve, the UK's first nationwide content-rich internet service achieved one million customers in its first six months. Freeserve joined the FTSE 100 in March 2000.



2000
Spain and France were the target markets for the launch of PC City, a new generation of the successful PC World format.



2002
From one store to Europe's market leading specialist electricals retailer with stores in 11 countries serving tens of millions every year. The man who drove its creation hands on a record beating business.

