

SPRING FOOTWEAR

Springing into Action

Spring Footwear's founders bring their passion for shoemaking to the fashion industry, offering attractive selections to more than 2,000 retailers nationwide. **BY JANICE HOPPE-SPIERS**



The L'Artiste line combines the comfort of Spring Step with colorful, unique, French-inspired, hand-painted patterns.

David Ben Zikry, CEO and co-founder
www.springfootwear.com
Pompano Beach, Fla.

Identical twin brothers David and Avi Ben Zikry have been in the shoe business for as long as they can remember. The patriarch of the Ben Zikry family moved his wife and nine children to a small village south of Tel Aviv, Israel, where he started his own shoe factory. "From a very early age we remember the smell of glue and the sight of making shoes as we became very involved in the family business," David Ben Zikry says. "We were proficient in shoemaking by the age of 12."

David and Avi Ben Zikry didn't know it at the time, but this early education in shoemaking would lay the foundation for Spring Footwear, which they would launch in New York City in 1991. The idea came to them after vacationing in New York in the 1980s where they saw a big gap in fashion between Europe and America. "In 1984, when we were 16 years old we dropped out of school, moved to the United States and got a small place in Queens where we started our first venture with the idea of duplicating our father's business model," David Ben Zikry says. "We sold shoes in the front of the store, made the shoes in the middle of the store and lived in the back of the store."

The brothers' first venture was a bit slow to get going, but finally found its footing in the weekly flea market where European customers instantly fell in love with the product. After only four years, the Ben Zikry brothers shut down their makeshift factory and headed back to Israel where it is required all men serve a few years in the military. "We came back to America after serving and our company was reborn as Spring Footwear," Ben Zikry says. "We decided it was time to find a network of factories and start distributing our product across the United States."

Category Leader

Today, Spring Footwear has grown from two to 150 employees and spread its wings from New York City to Pompano Beach, Fla., where it is currently headquartered. Throughout the years, the company has made 20 million pairs of shoes and launched seven brands, becoming the leader in the European comfort category.

Spring Step is the first brand the Ben Zikry brothers launched and remains the backbone of the company. Today, Spring Footwear features Spring Step Women and Spring Step Men. Spring Step Professional is oil- and skid-resistant, making it popular amongst the medical and restaurant workforces.

Azura is a fashion-forward line that does well in

David (left) and Avi Ben Zikry are involved in the design and development of every product for Spring Footwear.



boutique retailers. L'Artiste combines the comfort of Spring Step with colorful, unique, French-inspired, hand-painted patterns that are wearable works of art. Flexus was created for both men and women, offering flexible, light-weight, slip-resistant technical comfort sandals, flats, moccasins and boots. Patrizia offers tremendous value to its volume customers, featuring Spring Step comfort and technology.

“My brother and myself are involved in the design and development of every product,” David Ben Zikry says. “We both travel extensively year-round to Paris, Milan and anywhere we find innovation. We draw inspiration every day from places, paintings, nature, there really is no limit. There are so many different things that give of us that spark that we then translate into our products.”

Although product lines are officially launched twice a year, innovation is ongoing at Spring Footwear. “New styles are being born on a daily basis and we are constantly working whether it’s spring, summer, fall, or winter,” Ben Zikry says. “New product development is constant.”

Ben Zikry attributes the company’s innovation and continued to success to its people. “People are the foundation of anything good that we can make,” he says. “It all starts with people. The product is key, but product can’t invent people. People invent products and we are very lucky to have very good team members who have been loyal and built outstanding successful relationships with many of our retailers. The company continues to grow to the next level.”

Good Business

Spring Footwear’s brands are in more than 2,000 specialty boutique retailers across the United States. “The boutique

retailers are looking for unique products, good quality and a good company to support their specific needs,” Ben Zikry says. “We are a solid business from the bottom up. We understand the entire scope of bringing a unique product to the marketplace.”

At its warehouse in Florida, Spring Footwear inventories 500,000 pairs of shoes to ensure its retailers can reorder according to their needs and test products. “Retailers are looking for unique products and our price points are advantageous,” Ben Zikry notes. “We offer a great value to our customers. The real key to our success is delivering new products every season. Half our stock consists of new product and the other half is made up of our annual styles.”

Moving forward, Spring Footwear plans to continue leading the European comfort footwear category with integrity, honesty and forming longtime partnerships with its retailers and loyal consumers. “We have a passion for the fashion industry and love what we do,” Ben Zikry says. “We have been in business for over 28 years and are seeing our retailers survive the online businesses and all the challenges that come with it. It’s a testament that we must be doing something right. If you look at the big picture, it’s all about developing long-term partnerships.”

