

PRESS RELEASE

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Made to Last: Clarks launches new strategy to revitalise the iconic global footwear brand in its third century

Clarks, the 195-year-old world renowned British shoe brand, has announced its long-term ‘made to last’ strategy that is designed to ensure that Clarks has a sustainable and successful future, keeping it in step with changes in how consumers around the world choose and buy their shoes.

CEO Giorgio Presca today announced that this new strategy will deliver:

- A new brand strategy focussed on exploiting the brand’s potential, leveraging its heritage, its iconic timeless shoes and their consumer relevance in today’s market. It will focus on sustainability, product innovation, design and quality, and digital enhancement to help customers properly interact with the Clarks brand, and select and buy shoes in the most convenient ways for their lifestyle.
- A new organisation with an end to end operating model that will enable Clarks to deliver its strategy in a lean, effective and quick manner. This will require a total reduction in the company’s global workforce of approximately 900 corporate roles, partially balanced by the creation of around 200 new roles. It is expected that approximately 700 employees will leave the business over 18 months.

As part of this new strategy, Mr Presca today announced 160 redundancies in Clarks’ operations around the world, including 108 at its headquarters in Street, Somerset, and confirmed that the company is actively supporting staff to find alternative employment within or outside of Clarks. “There are exciting opportunities ahead for our business, and we are having to make some difficult decisions to get there. We thank all affected staff for their contribution to our business and they leave their roles with our heartfelt respect and support,” said Mr Presca.

Today’s announcement is the latest phase of Clarks’ ‘made to last’ strategy that began at the end of last year when 170 employees left the business globally, and Mr Presca confirmed that the business will continue to review its stores in line with changing consumer needs.

In a separate move in March to respond to the impact of Covid-19 health risks, Clarks announced the temporary closure of many of its stores around the world to protect its staff and customers. Since then the company has begun to reopen in China and in some markets in Europe and is closely following guidance from the governments and health authorities in the UK, US and elsewhere, and is taking appropriate measures to reopen when it is right and safe to do so. To prudently address the short-term liquidity needs caused by the Covid-19 crisis, the Clarks leadership team has also been reviewing funding options with selected advisors to confidently position the business to deliver its strategy and enable future growth.

Mr Presca confirmed that Clarks is now concentrating on expanding the use of digital and social channels to connect with consumers as part of its long-term strategy. “With two centuries of change and adaptation behind us, Clarks has proved itself to be one of the most resilient brands in the world, with our theme ‘Then, Now, Always.’”

He pointed to Clarks’ timeless Desert Boot, created 70 years ago by Nathan Clark, as an example of the simplicity, individuality and resilience of the Clarks brand. “The Desert Boot was a radical product that broke all the rules. It was launched as a utility shoe in 1950 but has since become a much-copied, globally-adopted icon of casual footwear featuring a design signature that is simple, functional and timelessly stylish.

“To ignite our emotional connection with consumers, we have organised Clarks’ brand portfolio across three distinct business units that each represent a unique segment of the shoe market – Clarks Originals, Clarks, Collection and Cloudsteppers by Clarks,” said Mr Presca, who was appointed as Clarks’ CEO in February 2019 with more than 20 years of experience in managing and developing global premium brands, including Geox, Diesel, Golden Goose, VF corps and Levi Strauss & Co.

“This is helping us move fast to get ahead of the changes in the ways that our consumers live their lives, so that we are there for them every step of the way.”

He added: “We are a business that walks its own path, and we are evolving to put our brand and consumers at the heart of everything we do. This will ensure that our organisation is made to last, empowering our people to contribute to a great future for the company.”

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About Clarks

Clarks, based in Somerset, England, has been at the forefront of innovative shoemaking since its foundation in 1825, when brothers James and Cyrus Clark made a slipper from sheepskin off-cuts. At the time it was ground-breaking; a combination of invention and craftsmanship that’s remained at the heart of what the brand does now.

In the Clarks archive of more than 22,000 pairs are shoes that have sparked revolutions and defined generations. From the original Clarks Desert Boot, first designed by Nathan Clark and launched in 1950 to the iconic Wallabee, each design has an instantly recognisable signature - a unique combination of craftsmanship and innovation that make it unmistakably Clarks.