

> **Tried, Trusted & Trendy:**

# Alain Afflelou's Future is Looking Good

For the past 40 years, Alain Afflelou's reassuring manner and trusted values, as well as his expertise and knack for innovation, have made his surname a part of daily life in France.

Company founder Alain Afflelou's passion for his work and deep respect for his customers has made a difference which distinguishes him from his competitors. He conveys an image based on family values and solidarity.

The company history is tightly linked to Afflelou's life. In June, 1962, Alain Afflelou, the 14-year-old son of an artisan baker, left his native Algeria for France. After going to school in Marseille for one year, he moved to Bordeaux, where he completed high school and obtained his Bachelor degree in 1967.

At the end of a three-year programme at the Parisian School of optics, he obtained his Eyewear, Optician and Audio-Prosthetist diploma. He opened his first optical store in 1972 in Le Bouscat, a suburb of Bordeaux.

He quickly realised that wearing glasses was experienced by many as a constraint and decided to change the way people think about eyewear. He determined to make them enjoy wearing spectacles. And succeeded.

Alain Afflelou is an optician dedicated to his customers, who has remained faithful to his core business values for 40 years. In a world changing faster than ever, where digitisation is prevailing, disposable products and obsolescence, his strategy has proven a reassuring one for his customers.

Afflelou knows what it takes to stay at the top of his field. What if innovation and success were synonymous for continuity and stability? Some of the secrets of his success are sticking to the basics: glasses that are affordable, effective and suited to a customer's morphology.

The brand is aspirational, aiming to improve the lives and well-being of consumers. It is rooted in society and plays an important role in providing corrective eyewear for the public, and wellbeing for its employees.

The company was also built on permanent innovation. In 1978, it was the first in the eyesight business to introduce discount campaigns. In 1991, it launched the offer of a



Flagship store on Les Champs Elysees



Store interior

one-hour turnaround for new glasses. In 1994 came the now-famous unbreakable lenses that provide 100% security for the eyes. In 1997, Afflelou introduced the first four-pack of eyeglasses for presbyopic (age-related short-sighted) customers. A year later, in 1998, the company offered the first "buy one, get one free" offer – a revolution in the optical sector

Other firsts include the 2009 Launch of NextYear offer: no fees or interest charges, and a year to pay. The brand also launched single-use lenses, and hearing aids that are sophisticated and affordable.

One immensely successful innovation is the Smart Tonic concept (solar clips or magnetic-



Alain Afflelou with Sharon Stone

specific lenses that can be attached to a frame): 600,000 clips and 300,000 frames were sold in a few months.

Today, opticians play a key role in improving the lives of those who wear eyeglasses. The Afflelou company is proud of the quality of the products it provides for its franchises. Recent French legislative changes have made it possible for opticians to perform eyesight check-ups, which means they are acknowledged as qualified specialists. The relationship between these professionals and their clients is always based on trust. With a sometimes-unstable global economic environment, customers have become more price-sensitive. There is a need to provide qualitative and innovative solutions at an affordable price. It is the essence of the brand's policy.

The new image of the Alain Afflelou Stores in France (and abroad) makes points-of-sale more attractive than ever: shiny cascades of sunglasses on the walls, the latest offers and information broadcast on screens. Particular attention was paid to the lighting, and backlighting, of the showroom furniture used to display the frame choices. The optical department offers diffused light and contrasting pale tones; white, grey and gold create a soft, clean and bright ambiance.

Five themes are each represented by a flagship product line displayed in a shiny black frame with the Afflelou logo in cut-out letters: fashion, trend, culture, innovation, essentials.

The great success of the collaboration between American actress Sharon Stone and the brand also contributes to reinforce the "fashion and glamour" image of the trendy, affordable products of high quality. Stone is an ideal ambassador for the brand with her own blend of beauty and elegance.

Last but not least: digital transformation, which impacts all business operations. New ways to work, to communicate, and to understand. From optimising internal operations to organising the in-store displays without neglecting logistics, Afflelou favours an omnichannel approach

Alain Afflelou wishes to attract new customers and encourage the loyalty of the existing ones via a market segmentation, optimised by collecting and processing customers' data. CRM Optimisation makes life easier for opticians and customers. Simpler and improved inventory management (RFID inventories), easier product ordering (POS material, eyeglass frames, and contact lenses delivered together), customer appointments made online with connected store agenda. There is also interaction with customers before they enter in the store via window-dressing (visual merchandising).

Sticking to the basics has always driven the brand and its founder. Alain Afflelou wants customers to be happy and satisfied, and aims to continually increase levels of service. ❁