

Blundstone Footwear - IP rights at the soul of Blundstone's business strategy

City or country dweller, just about everyone has heard of Blundstone Footwear. It's a company name and an Australian trade mark of almost legendary status.

Blundstone has been around for a long time. It was in the 1870s when brothers James and Thomas Cuthbertson began making rural workboots in Hobart. The brothers sold their successful business to John and Eliza Blundstone in 1932. Since then, the company has supplied boots to diggers in World Wars I and II, to workers on farms and building-sites and most recently, to the dance troop, Tap Dogs, which performed at the Opening Ceremony at the Sydney Olympics - wearing Blundstones..

Branding and trade marks are highly valuable to the Blundstone company. The Blundstone brand is synonymous with quality and durability. More recently, the brand and the boots have become somewhat trendy among young urban dwellers. This is a fact that would probably stun the founders of the workboot company!

The company makes more than 70 different styles with a million pairs of boots and shoes rolling off the production line each year. Blundstone's factory combines high-tech robotics with the traditional cutting and stitching machines of yesteryear.

In 2001, Blundstone sold more than 1.25 million pairs of shoes. Says Barry Smith, Marketing Manager, "Almost half of what we produce is industrial safety footwear. Of what's left, probably half of that is the rural market, and the remainder is a mixture of largely urban based cross-over markets".

Blundstone is largely self sufficient with its own tannery, component manufacturing processes, in-house technicians and designers, multiple websites and a research and development division.

"We have developed a heel shock protection system which we have patented all over the world. We've developed this in association with the CSIRO and with the National Centre for Orthotics and Prosthetics at La Trobe University", says Barry.

Great success for a company that began humbly in Hobart over a century ago.