

# SKYlink expands portfolio to focus on airports and cruise ship business



SKYlink looks to explore the beauty channel in a highly competitive business

For the past seven years, Hamburg based SKYlink GmbH, has been growing to become one of the industry's most successful travel retail distribution companies. With a wide portfolio of brands that includes its own highly successful demi-fine jewelry line: Haus of Deitrich.

While much of its early success has been built on inflight sales – SKYlink works with more than 80 key carriers globally – the company has been focused on developing its airport and cruise-ship business with new brands brought in-house specifically for these sectors.

The men behind SKYlink are Barry Fitzpatrick and Thomas Wesch who set up the company in 2012 with minimum investment and maximum levels of passion, expertise and a bold ambition to base their offer on introducing brands that offered 'something different' to the industry in terms of innovation, uniqueness and creativity. One of the first to sign up for inflight distribution was Furla and this travel retail superstar leathersgoods brand remains a client today, while ex global travel retail director Gerry Munday now works with SKYlink in an advisory capacity.

Today, the company has a team of 15 and is growing with a brand portfolio that has been carefully developed to ensure SKYlink stays true to its initial goals.

"Every new brand that we work with is seen as a long-term partnership. It's not just about making a margin, but working together with trusting and individually based relationships," says co-founder and Managing Director, Barry Fitzpatrick. "For us brand values are paramount; each name that we deal with – whether a global such as Mulberry or niche company like Ucon Acrobatics with their sustainable bags – demands a different approach that takes into account elements such as marketing methodology, adjacencies etc."

To support its growing airport and cruise ship business, SKYlink has recently added brands such as John Hardy, Swarovski licensed brand division's DKNY and Karl Lagerfeld and the iconic FAO Schwarz toys.

"Adding FAO Schwarz has been something of a departure for us as we've always focused on fashion and accessories," continues Fitzpatrick. "But the company contacted us and we were immediately struck and impressed by the experiential ethos of FAO Schwarz. Working together we've created a

core range of items that are just perfect for travel retail and we're beginning to gain some great traction now, working with a number of retailers including DFS."

One of SKYlink's successful airport and cruise ship brands is Linda Farrow sunglasses, now listed with key retailers in Istanbul, Abu Dhabi, Moscow, Macau and London Heathrow. "What we learned very quickly is that you cannot take a successful inflight brand and make it work in an airport shop or on a cruise ship," says Fitzpatrick. "Linda Farrow is perfect - a British eyewear brand with collections that start from 400 euros and go up to 1500 euros. The brand has built up a mind-blowing celebrity following including Kendall Jenner, Kate Moss, Beyonce, Meghan Markle and Taylor Swift. The awareness of the brand in APAC makes it highly desirable and, where listed, the results are speaking for themselves."

Now SKYlink is actively looking to develop its portfolio further. "We are very keen to explore the beauty channel, particularly cosmetics where we see masses of potential," continues Fitzpatrick. "It's a highly competitive business, we're very aware of that, but we're confident that there's room for the right brands - particularly those that combine beauty with 'tech'."

While some distributors work regionally, SKYlink is very much a globally focused company - with an employee base that reflects that internationality. "Our people are a key part of our success and we like to think that every member of the team is as individual, creative and as inspired as the brands we represent."

In 2012, Fitzpatrick described setting up SKYlink as "a dream come true" for him and Thomas. At the time they aspired to gaining a reputation for an open and honest service based on real value and creative thinking. There's no question that seven years on, the pair have more than achieved their goals and, from SKYlink - there's plenty more to come!

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