

A large, stylized graphic of the BIC logo, which is a white bird-like shape with a large circular eye, set against an orange background. The logo is partially cut off on the right side.

**BIC**

Simple and Joyful



# BIC

## Simple and Joyful

Of Marcel Bich's eleven children, almost all have contributed to the Bic business in some way. Eager to have the big picture of the history of Bic, the members of the third and fourth generation, imagined a book that would retrace said history in an educational way. The Bic Group took the chance in this editorial project to distribute this history, which was originally intended for a close family circle, more broadly. Through this gesture, Bic wished to thank its current and past collaborators. Without them, these pages, made of innovations and risk-taking, could not have been written.





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# History at A Glance

Through a selection of key dates, this chronology provides an understanding of Bic's most meaningful moments in a few pages.

- The history of the company
- The history of stationery
- The history of the lighter
- The history of the razor

## THE BIRTH OF BIC

## BIC'S DEBUT IN STATIONERY

**1954**

Establishment in Italy  
Manufacturing unit opens under license in Spain, covering the entire Iberian Peninsula

**1955**

Establishment in Switzerland and on the Dutch, Austrian, and German markets

**1956**

Creation by Marcel Bich, Édouard Buffard, and chemist Gilles Bavay of the Encres BB 56 company (BB stands for Bich and Bavay)

Launch of the Bic M10 retractable pen



**1956**

Establishment in Brazil

**1965**

Entry into the Japanese market and some Asian markets

**1965**

Authorization of the ballpoint pen in French schools

**1969**

Launch of imprinted promotional products activity in France and the United States



**1970**

Bic acquires 72.5% of the shares of the company Guy Laroche, an haute couture and ready-to-wear fashion house

The company would be sold to Rech International in 2001



**1944**

Marcel Bich (opposite, left) and Édouard Buffard (right) create P.P.A. (*Porte-plume, Portemines et Accessoires* [Penholders, Mechanical Pencils, and Accessories]) in Clichy-la-Garenne (France)



**1948**

Foundation of the production companies La Compagnie de Moulages, Décolletage Plastique, and Osmior

**1950**

Creation of the Bic brand



**1950**

Launch of the Bic Cristal pen in France



**1951**

First export to Belgium

**1952**

Licence agreement signed with Biro Patent, patent holder of László Bíró, one of the inventors of the ballpoint pen

**1953**

Creation of the Bic Company

**1957**

Acquisition of the English group Biro Swan, which opens the markets of the sterling zone to Bic

**1958**

Bic begins to establish itself in North Africa and the Middle East

Bic receives the Oscar for Outstanding Exporter

Bic enters the Scandinavian markets

**1958**

Establishment in North America through the acquisition of Waterman US

**1961**

Launch of a new tungsten carbide ballpoint

Raymond Savignac draws the "Bic Boy"

He would then be definitively placed in front of the 3 letters BIC to form the brand's new logo



**1970**

Launch of the Bic 4 Color pen



**1971**

Listing of Bic Corporation, a North American subsidiary, on the New York Stock Exchange

**1972**

Listing of Société Bic on the Paris Stock Exchange

**1972**

Marcel Bich takes personal control of the company Dim-Rosy, which he then sold to Bic

Bic gradually sold Dim-Rosy to the Sara Lee Group from 1987

**1972**

Diversification in writing feltpens

## A NEW PRODUCT CATEGORY: THE LIGHTER

**1973**

Launch of Bic's first pocket lighter, the Bic Maxi lighter



**1979**

Acquisition by Marcel Bich of Tabur Marine, subsequently integrated into Bic Sport

**1979**

With the acquisition of Conté, Bic enters the coloring, marking, and graphite lead sectors



**1980**

Launch of the Bic razor with a Sensitive blade



**1988**

Launch of the 7 de Conté mechanical pencil, later called Bic Matic



**1988**

Launch of the Bic perfume

Its manufacture and marketing stopped in 1991

**1990**

Launch of the decorated BIC lighter



**1992**

Launch of the Bic Slim lighter. Its height is the same as the maxi model, and its width is like that of the mini model



**1992**

Launch of the Bic Twin Select bi-blade razor



## BIC LAUNCHES ITS RAZOR



**1975**

Launch of the BIC single-piece single-blade razor

**1976**

Marcel Bich finalized the acquisition of the Dufour shipyard, subsequently integrated into Bic Sport

**1981**

Acquisition by BIC of Tabur Marine, which became BIC Marine, then BIC Sport in 1985

Bic Sport will be sold to Tahe Outdoors in 2019

**1985**

Launch of the mini BIC lighter



**1988**

Launch of the BIC Barre Metal razor



**1991**

Launch of the electronic BIC lighter



**1992**

Purchase of Wite-Out, a North American brand of correction products



**1993**

Launch of the Evolution pencil, with no wood and made of synthetic resin based on recycled material



**1993**

Marcel Bich entrusts the management of the group to his son Bruno



**1994**

Launch in France of the Bic Twin Lady bi-blade razor for women



**1995**

Bic Corporation exits the New York Stock Exchange

Development of Bic on the Eastern and Central European markets

**1995**

Expansion of Bic Graphic (Promotional products) in Europe

**1997**

Expansion of Bic in Asia

**1999**

Launch of the Bic Softwin razor with pivoting head and lubricating strips



**2001**

The Bic Cristal pen enters the permanent collections of the MoMA

This was followed by the admission of the Bic Maxi Lighter in 2005

**2003**

Launch of the Bic sustainable development program

Bic initiates an R&D program in fuel cell cartridges

**2006**

Mario Guevara is appointed CEO



**2007**

Acquisitions in the promotional products sector until 2009

In 2017, the North American activities of Bic Graphic (promotional products) were sold

**2008**

Launch in France of the Bic Phone, a ready-to-use mobile phone

The final edition was released in 2010

**2009**

Launch of the Bic Ecolutions razor with a bioplastic handle and 100% recycled cardboard packaging

**2011**

Acquisition of Angstrom Power, manufacturer of fuel cell chargers

This technology was sold to Intelligent Energy in 2015

**2011**

Partnership in Europe with TerraCycle for the collection of used writing instruments



**2011**

G8 and G20 participants were given a Bic 4 Colors pen decorated for the occasion with the symbols of France, which then presided over these two summits





**1997**

Acquisition of Tipp-Ex, European leader in correction products



**1997**

Acquisition of Sheaffer

This brand of high-end writing instruments was sold to the American company AT Cross in 2014

**1998**

Launch of the Bic Sure Start utility lighter in the United States



**2004**

Acquisition of the French school fountain pen brand Stypen



**2004**

Launch of the Bic Soleil razor for women

Launch of the Bic 3 three-blade razor



**2006**

Acquisition of Pimaco, an adhesive labels manufacturer and distributor in Brazil

The company was sold to Grupo CCRR in 2020

**2009**

Launch of the Bic Hybrid Advance razor offered in a packaging kit including a handle and six refills



**2009**

Bic becomes the first writing instrument manufacturer to receive the French eco-label, NF Environment (NF400), for seven of its products



**2009**

Acquisition of 40% of Cello Pens, an Indian leader in writing instruments

This operation was finalized in 2015



**2012**

Opening of a subsidiary in Dubai, a bridgehead for development in the Africa Middle East zone

**2013**

Parc Marcel Bich is inaugurated in Clichy in the presence of the Bich family

It is located on the site of the first Bic factory, impasse des Cailloux



**2014**

Launch of the Bic Soleil Glow three-blade razor for women



**2015**

Opening of the shopbic.com in the United States, the group's first online shopping platform

**2015**

Launch of the Bic Flex 5 five-blade razor



**2018**

Launch of Bic Soleil Balance and Bic Flex 5 Hybrid razors



**2018**

Public exhibition of the Bic Contemporary Art Collection



**2019**

Launch of the online sales site bic.com in France

**2019**

Launch of Made for You, the first gender-neutral razor

**2019**

Purchase of the Lucky Stationery brand in Nigeria



**2020**

Acquisition of DjEEP, a French manufacturer of high-end and decorated pocket lighters



**2021**

Launch of the Bic Cristal Re'New ballpoint pen, the first refillable metallic pen





**2016**

Creation of the Bic Corporate Foundation for Education



**2017**

In partnership with Plas Eco, launch of Ubicuity furniture made from recycled pens



**2017**

Creation of the Bic Shave Club: online sale of shaving products by subscription

The subscription offer ended in 2020

**2018**

Gonzalve Bich succeeds his father Bruno Bich as CEO of the group



**2018**

Haco Industries transfers its production sites in Kenya and its distribution activities in East Africa to Bic

**2018**

Launch of BodyMark by Bic, temporary tattoo marker



**2020**

Acquisition of Rocketbook, a brand of reusable smart notebooks



**2020**

Launch of the EZ Reach multi-purpose pocket lighter



**2021**

Launch of the Bic Bamboo razor, a five-blade Hybrid Flex with a handle made from responsibly-grown bamboo



**2022**

Acquisition of Inkbox, a Canadian brand of semi-permanent tattoos

**INKBOX**

Acquisition of Tattly, a leading decal brand based in the US

**TATTLY**  
DESIGN TEMPORARY TATTOOS



**2022**

Acquisition of AMI (Advanced Magnetic Interaction), a French start-up pioneer in augmented technology

**ami**  
ADVANCED MAGNETIC INTERACTION



# The Birth of an Entrepreneur

While Marcel Bich was born in Turin, Italy in 1914, it is in Aosta Valley, in Châtillon, where the paternal family has its ties. Descendant of a line of notable Piedmontese, the young Marcel left his native country for Spain when he was nine, where his father Mario, a mining engineer, found a job. In 1925, the family moved to France. Marcel became a French citizen in 1930 and studied law while embarking on a professional journey through in the stationery world.

# The Piedmontese Origins

It was in Turin, on July 29, 1914, at the same time World War I broke out, that Marcel (Marcello) Bich was born. Both of his parents grew up there. After having been at the forefront of Italian reunification, the capital of Piedmont was undergoing full industrial development at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since the inauguration of the first large Fiat factory in 1900, the city was referred to as the “automotive capital” of the country.

*Marcel Bich and his grandmother, Baroness Claude Bich, née Marie-Thérèse de Montbel, Turin, 1923.*



Marcel's mother, Marie-Victoire, came from a family of Savoyard nobility, the Muffats of Saint-Amour de Chanaz. In 1912, she married a young widower, Mario Bich, a descendant of a line originating from Aosta Valley, which was raised to nobility in 1841 by Victor-Emmanuel II, future King of Italy, then Duke of Savoy.

The first three children were born in the first three years of their union: Marie-Thérèse in 1913, Marcel the following year, and Albert in 1916. In Turin, the Bich children received a bilingual education. They learned French at the same time they learned Italian. Their Piedmontese childhood ended when Marcel turned nine.

In 1923, his father Mario, an engineer in the mining and metallurgical company of Peñarroya, a French company based in Andalusia, decided to settle in Madrid with his family. The same year, the family grew again with the birth of a fourth child, Gonzalve.

**"The best business school is to wake up one morning with the fear of hunger."**

*Marcel Bich*



# Growing up in a family marked by itinerancy

The Bich family stayed in Madrid for two years. Marcel was enrolled in the French Lycée, where he learned English in addition to Castilian. This mastery of foreign languages – he would become trilingual – would be an important asset for the entrepreneur he would become. His father Mario is said to be a brilliant but somewhat eccentric man. Following his experience in the mines, he aimed to go into business. He worked as a car salesman for a while before becoming a farmer on a vast estate in Touraine. Marcel and Albert became boarders with the Dominican brothers in Arcachon, where they remained for five years before going back to their parents in Paris in 1930. They were already French citizens, however the Bichs were nevertheless in a predicament. Mario's successive unsuccessful ventures got the better of their fortune.

The family settled in a modest apartment at Porte de Champerret in the 17<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, a location that allowed young Marcel to attend the renowned Lycée Carnot nearby. The young man quickly became friends with a group of congenial peers. One of them, François Arnaud, would become his loyal friend and would work alongside him for a long time.

The year after he moved to Paris, Marcel Bich enrolled in law school while working odd jobs to help his parents financially. With his driver's license in hand, he first worked as a delivery man and then as a sales representative before being hired by Beaufort, a company that specialized in the manufacturing of office supplies.

Marcel Bich  
(3<sup>rd</sup> rank, 6<sup>th</sup> from the right) at lycée  
Carnot, Paris, 1931.  
(Part. Coll.)



# The Formative Years

Indeed, chance led Marcel into the stationery sector. He would not be a civil official in the colonial administration like his father, who dreamed of a safe and stable career for him, had eagerly hoped: he would miss the entrance exam! Marcel quickly noticed a number of problems within Beaurepaire, including its poor management system. Although hired to fill a simple “scribbler” position, he was soon offered a training mentorship that would open the doors to a big opportunity. After the acquisition of the company by Ecrisec, a producer of fountain pens, and eventually Encre Stephens, an English company, Marcel was promoted to production manager, a step that would allow him to resolve the management issues he once noticed.

For the Bich family, the streak of difficult times was now over. Not only did Marcel have a comfortable income, but Mario, his father, agreed to become an engineer again. Marcel, aged 22, made friends with his older sister's friend and married her the following year.

In 1938, Louise Chamussy, nicknamed Mimi, gave birth to Claude, their first child, who would have a leading role with his father. But the clouds that were hovering over Europe were quick to chase away the care-free feelings that the young couple enjoyed. Marcel was called to fight in the war in September 1939, where he served in the air force before demobilizing in 1940. He then left for Thiers in Puy-de-Dôme, where the staff of the Société des Encre Stephens had withdrawn before the company once again returned to the capital. A few months after the Bichs resettled in Paris in 1941, his first daughter, Marie-Caroline, was born.

During the Occupation, Marcel made frequent trips between Paris and his home in Rhuis, in the Oise, from where he brought back food for his family and for the workers at Stephens.

Marcel Bich, 2<sup>nd</sup> to the left, mobilized in Tours, winter 1939/1940.

**“You become an architect, you become an engineer, but you are born a builder. The taste for risk is the key quality of an entrepreneur.”**

*Eugene Viollet-le-Duc*



# • COMPAGNIE • DES • ENCRE • S •

SOCIÉTÉ ANONYME AU CAPITAL DE 2 625 000 FRANCS

MANUFACTURE DE PORTE-PLUME RÉSERVOIRS & DES ENCRE S

TÉLÉPH : PÉREIRE 36-65  
3 LIGNES GROUPEES  
ADRESSE TÉLÉGRAPHIQUE  
STEFENCRÉ-LEVALLOIS-PERRET-SEINE  
COMPTE CHÈQUES POSTAUX N° 2109-49  
R. C. SEINE 273 348 B  
PRODUCTEUR N° 1135 SEINE C.A.O.

# Stephens'

SIÈGE SOCIAL, USINES  
& BUREAUX  
37, Rue Deguingand  
LEVALLOIS-PERRET Seine



## CERTIFICAT

Je soussigné René BEAUREPAIRE, Président Direc-  
teur Général de la COMPAGNIE DES ENCRE S, 37, rue de Deguingand à  
LEVALLOIS-PERRET, certifie avoir employé Monsieur Marcel BICH,  
domicilié I, rue Verniquet à PARIS, comme Directeur Administratif,  
du 1er Avril 1937 au 31 Mars 1945 .

Je n'ai eu qu'à me louer de sa collaboration .  
Il a quitté la Société pour prendre la direction d'une affaire per-  
sonnelle .

LEVALLOIS, le 17 Avril 1945

Le Président  
Directeur Général

ENCRE S STYLOGRAPHIQUES

*Stephens'*

ENCRE S DE BUREAU

*Stephens'*

PORTE-PLUME-RÉSERVOIR

*Stephens'*

PORTE-PLUME-RÉSERVOIR

*"Autograph"*





Stand and display of  
Bic writing instruments  
in the 1950s.



# The Reinvention of Writing

Eager to be his own boss, Marcel Bich founded his company as soon as Paris was liberated. He manufactured fountain pen components for major brands until a special order for 10,000 ballpoint pens changed the course of history. Being a visionary, Marcel Bich understood from a very early stage the importance of advertising in promoting the benefits of the ballpoint pen that he successfully improved. His collaboration with the best agencies of the time accelerated the distribution of his products and left behind a remarkable iconography that is a testament to the rapid beginnings of Bic. The businessman also saw the need to control the entire production chain and, thus, forged the model of Bic from the very first years.

# The creation of P.P.A.

At the end of the war, Marcel Bich, thirty years old, was tired of growing a business that was not his. He went in search of a business to purchase. His colleague and ally Édouard Buffard, who was eager to be part of the adventure, told him about a fountain pen factory created by a former Stephens foreman.

The man struggled to stay above water, leading him to sell his old-fashioned machines and dilapidated shed, located at 18 impasse des Cailloux in Clichy, to Marcel and Edouard for 500,000 francs. On October 25, 1944, P.P.A., Porte-plume, Portemines & Accessoires, was born. Marcel and Edouard became Watermans subcontractors, selling the large US firm, with two production sites in Paris and the inner suburbs, a variety of fountain pen bodies, gold nibs, and mechanical pencil parts.

Realizing that, in order to succeed, it is necessary to manufacture products faster and cheaper, Marcel Bich set out to find more efficient machines.

In Switzerland, he is impressed by Tornos automatic lathes (and then, later, by the Bechlers), used to manufacture the inner gears for Patek and Jaeger-LeCoultre watches.

He had four of them sent to Clichy. They were extremely precise in metal, but unfortunately proved to be ineffective in ebonite, the material used for penholders. Marcel Bich put these machines in a back corner of the workshop and decided to acquire an injection mold in Austria that cast plastic material at 280 °C under a thrust of 250 tons. The results were immediate: at the end of 1948, 3,000 nibs and 5,000 frames left the Clichy factory every day and the cost of manufacturing a pen holder body dropped from 100 to 5 francs. Marcel Bich won the competitiveness bet!

*Entrance to the factory, impasse des Cailloux in Clichy-la-Garenne, in the 1950s (Paris-Presse).*

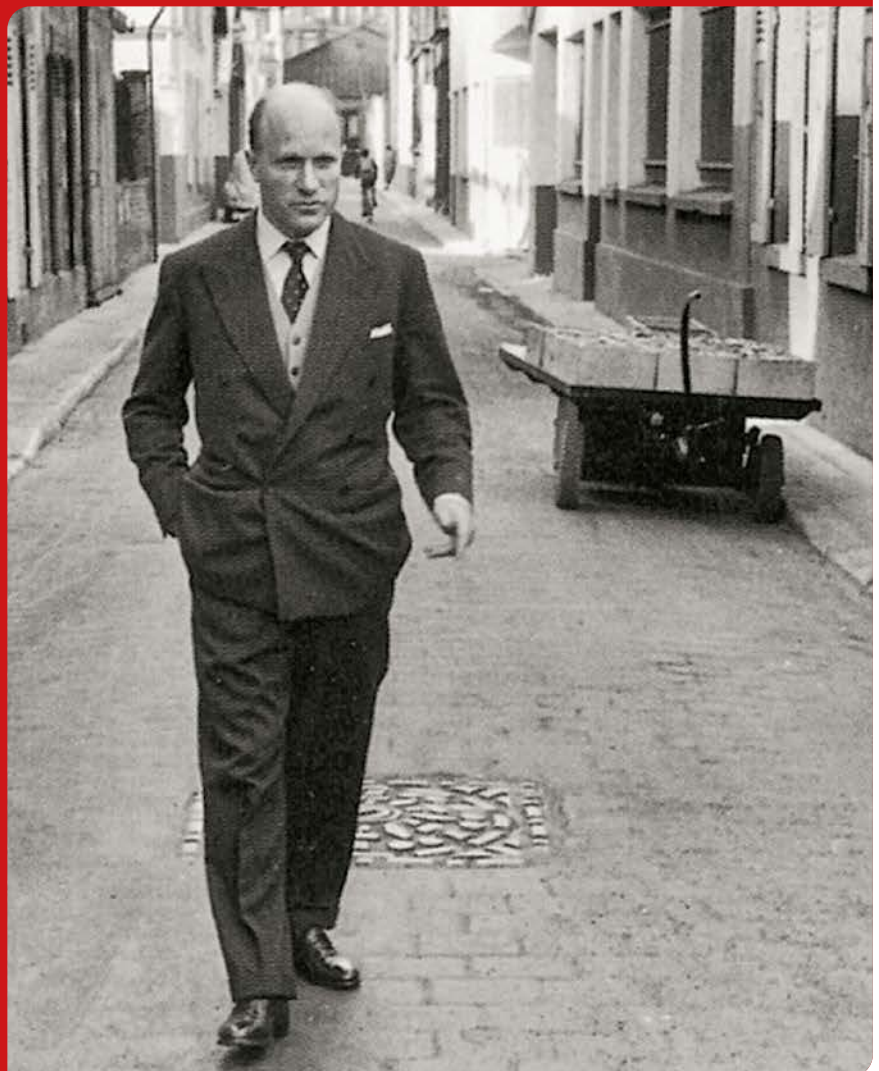


# Improving the ballpoint pen: the battle of Marcel Bich

Having finally become a prosperous business, P.P.A. received an order for 10,000 frames for ballpoint pens at the beginning of 1949. At that time, the main ballpoint pens in circulation were the Birome, designed by the Hungarian László Bíró in 1938 and improved in 1943, and the Rocket designed by Reynolds and launched in the United States in 1945. However, the pens from both brands were particularly known for their defects. *"This kind of pen will never catch on,"* the CEO of Waterman even said. Being unaffected by the prophecy, Marcel Bich spent hours examining existing models in order to analyze what was causing the breakdowns that affect them. It took him almost two years of testing to understand that the solution lies in the manufacture and crimping of a perfectly round ball.

The idea of the ballpoint came to him suddenly, when he pushed a wheelbarrow in the garden of his country house in Oise. By observing the operation of the wheel, the evidence hit him: the ballpoint is the application of the wheel to writing.

He shared this with Raymond Desolle, director of Osmior, another company devoted to the creation of pens, and he helped him apply this principle. Marcel Bich then took the watchmaking machines purchased in Switzerland out of the shed. Thanks to those machines, he was able to quickly and successfully manufacture a more efficient and reliable ballpoint than those of his competitors. Likewise, he succeeded in perfecting the ink formula and the fit between the ballpoint, the tip, and the reservoir tube.



Marcel Bich at the factory,  
Impasse des Cailloux, 1955  
(Coll. JDF/O.Medias).

# Bic Cristal: The Rise of a New Era of Writing

*Bic Cristal was at the origin of an entire range of innovative pens, including the M10 with retractable tip, another iconic product of the brand released in 1956. Here is an extract from Bic's catalog for the same year.*

To promote his invention, which guarantees the writer no breakdowns and leaks, Marcel Bich decided to create his own brand, Bic, forged from his surname. Easy to remember and to pronounce, the abbreviation reflects Marcel Bich's simplicity design, which would inspire a new relationship with writing.

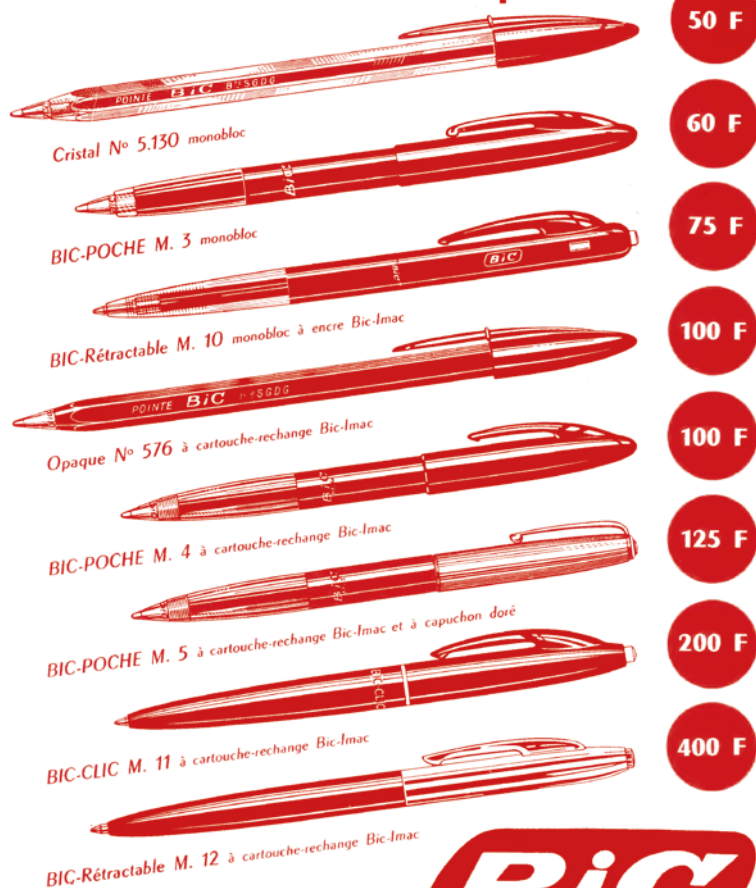
It was under the Bic brand that the Cristal was launched in December 1950: a beautiful, inexpensive, easy to handle, and light ballpoint pen.

Measuring 14 cm, the Cristal looks like a pencil with a hexagonal and transparent body (which allows users to check consumption in real time), ending in a brass tip. It is topped with a black, blue, red, green, or purple cap, which lets you know the color of the ink contained in the reservoir. The pen's ink also dries instantly on paper, representing a seemingly trivial but particularly remarkable innovation.

Originally designed to also be refillable with cartridges sold separately, the Cristal is praised by consumers as a pen that multiplies to infinity. Thanks to Marcel's innovation, P.P.A.'s turnover went from 331 to 760 million francs in one year. In 1951, nearly 21 million Bic pens were sold in France and 3.5 million in Belgium, which became the leading export country for the company's products.

While Marcel Bich was achieving this first great industrial and commercial victory, he was simultaneously facing a terrible personal and family tragedy: in March of 1950, his wife Louise died prematurely. She left behind their four young children, Claude, Marie-Caroline, and their two youngest sons, Bruno and François, born in 1946 and 1949 respectively.

## 8 modèles... une seule pointe...



... LA POINTE





# An ingenious advertisement for a product that would soon become very popular

Very early on, Marcel Bich understood the necessity of advertisements and the benefits that would come from addressing the consumer directly. For the launch of Bic Cristal in December 1950, he made an appointment with Pierre Guichenné, director of the AFP (Agence Française de Propagande [French Advertising Agency]). Pierre was hesitant at first, but became enthusiastic after visiting the P.P.A. factory. He assigned the design of the brand's first campaign to his advertising manager Robert Auclair. Immediately noticing the importance of the three crisp letters and the similarity between Bich and the French word "bille" [ballpoint], Pierre Guichenné suggested removing the "h" to create a universal brand name. The three letters, BIC, were then enclosed in a parallelogram with rounded corners: the brand and its first logo were created. The advertiser also carried out BIC's first ad campaign: "It's already written, ma'am!" After being tested out in the North of France, it was then taken up by the Parisian newspapers.

In just two years, Marcel Bich multiplied tenfold the budget devoted to advertising. The greatest poster artists of the time would line up and show their interest in Bic. In 1952, Raymond Savignac created a film and radio campaign, using the slogan "Elle court, elle court, la Pointe Bic" [It runs, it runs, the Bic Point]. Showing a relay runner rushing over a gigantic Bic pen, it symbolizes the revolutionary speed of the instrument.

Thanks to the recognition that advertising brought to him, Marcel Bich soon managed to extend to tobacco stores, to expanding

the distribution network of its items that were before traditionally reserved for stationery stores.

Bic pen become everyday objects. Advertising campaigns, increasingly inventive, soon warned consumers against counterfeiting.

e de millimètre, la pointe "BIC" écrit sans cesse dans tous les sens, sous tous les angles, d'un trait toujours égal et si aisément!' (What makes the good ballpoint pen, it's the 'BIC' point. Made according to a new patent, with its elements rigorously concentric, machined to 1/1000th of a millimeter, the 'BIC' point writes continuously in all directions, under all angles, with a stroke always equal and so easily!). Below that, it says 'La pointe "BIC" équipe 2 types de crayons à bille de grandes marques, qui offrent une double garantie: celle de leur propre marque et celle de la pointe "BIC". Vous les trouverez;' (The 'BIC' point equips 2 types of ballpoint pens of big brands, which offer a double guarantee: that of their own brand and that of the 'BIC' point. You will find them;). Then, it lists 'Type "cristal", dans les "Monoprix"..... 50 Fr.' and 'Type à cartouche interchangeable, chez les papetiers et les spécialistes du stylo..... 100 Fr.' At the bottom, it says 'elle court elle court' (it runs, it runs) above the 'LA POINTE BIC' logo. To the right of the logo is a drawing of a hand holding a pen."/>

C'est déjà noté  
Madame!

Commande, prix, adresse,  
la vendeuse ne se trompe  
jamais, écrit sans arrêt  
-et si aisément: elle  
a une pointe BIC.

Ce qui fait le bon crayon à bille,  
c'est la pointe "BIC". Réalisée selon un  
brevet nouveau, avec ses éléments ri-  
gou-reu-se-ment concentriques, usinés au  
1/1000<sup>e</sup> de millimètre, la pointe "BIC"  
écrit sans cesse dans tous les sens, sous  
tous les angles, d'un trait toujours égal et  
si aisément!

La pointe "BIC" équipe 2 types de  
crayons à bille de grandes marques, qui  
offrent une double garantie: celle de  
leur propre marque et celle de la pointe  
"BIC". Vous les trouverez;

Type "cristal",  
dans les "Monoprix"..... 50 Fr.  
Type à cartouche interchan-  
geable, chez les papetiers et  
les spécialistes du stylo..... 100 Fr.

elle court elle court  
LA POINTE  
**BIC**

First Bic advertisement,  
published in La Voix du Nord,  
December 20, 1950.

# From jacket pockets to the school bag

The rapid success of the brand prompted Marcel Bich and Édouard Buffard to found the Bic company in 1953. Both men continued to innovate and created the Bic M10 in 1956. The brand's first ballpoint pen whose tip retracts using a side push-button, was a great success.

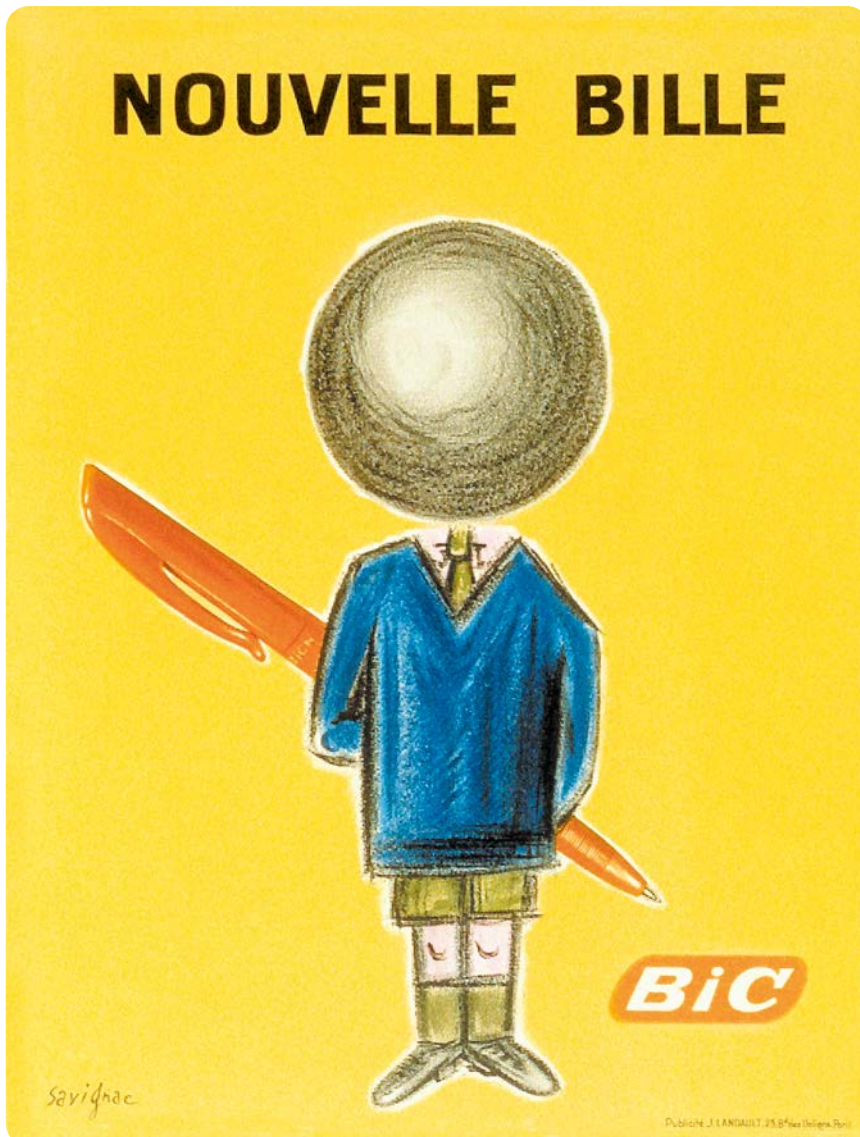
Marcel Bich was constantly seeking to perfect his pens which led him to develop a tungsten carbide ballpoint that was much

more resistant than the steel used until then. From 1961, and in order to be clearly differentiated, all models fitted with the tungsten carbide had an orange body. It was due to the launch of this innovation that Savignac designed the "Bic Boy", a schoolboy in short pants and a tie, with a ballpoint as a head. Through this character, which appeared in the logo of the brand in 1962, next to the parallelogram, the goal was to establish it in schools, where the ballpoint pen faced fierce resistance.

In France, it was not until 1965 that students were authorized by National Education to abandon the dip pen. Sales of Bic jumped immediately! The Bic Cristal became popular with families for its excellent value for money. Happy to finally have clean copies without ink stains, children also like to chew on it and use it as a blowgun. In 1991, the cap was drilled to comply with British standard BS7272-1, intended to avoid the risk of suffocation in case of accidental ingestion.

The success of the Cristal was just the start of what would become a universally recognized lineup of pens. In 1970, Bic launched a new edition of its iconic pen: the 4 colors. The unique pen combined four ink cartridges of different colors (blue, black, green, and red) in a single pen body. In 1972, the company branched out to writing felt, an instrument invented in Japan ten years earlier. A specialized factory, the management of which was entrusted to Claude Bich, is located in Oise (France). In 1977 Gonzalve Bich, brother of Marcel Bich and Bic's Director and Sales Director, passed away. Bic's position in the world at the time was largely due to his qualities and activity in sales and advertising. Finally, in 1979, Bic entered the coloring, marking, and graphite market through the acquisition of the French company Conté. It was founded in 1795 and it had merged with Gilbert & Blanzv-Poure in 1960, then with Baignol & Farjon a few months earlier.

*The "Bic Man", advertisement for the "New Ball" campaign by Raymond Savignac, 1961.*



# The core of the company's success: quality control through an integrated industrial process

In order to control the entire pen production chain, Marcel Bich and Édouard Buffard created additional structures in 1948: the Compagnie des Moulages, which specialized in manufacturing injection molded pen frames; Société de Décolletage Plastique, created with René Steiner, professional turner<sup>1</sup>; finally, the company Osmior, dedicated to the production of pen nibs with Raymond Desolle.

In addition to enhancing the pen's body and ballpoint, they also secured processes for the development of the pen's ink. In 1956, the two partners, together with chemist Gilles Bavay, founded Société des Encres BB 56, which, from that moment on, would manufacture the ink for the pens. On that date, the Clichy workshop had become a large factory, where over 250 employees worked. Thanks to successive purchases of land, the factory extended over 4,000 m<sup>2</sup>. Every day, 372,000 pens are produced at the factory – that's 82 million units per year!

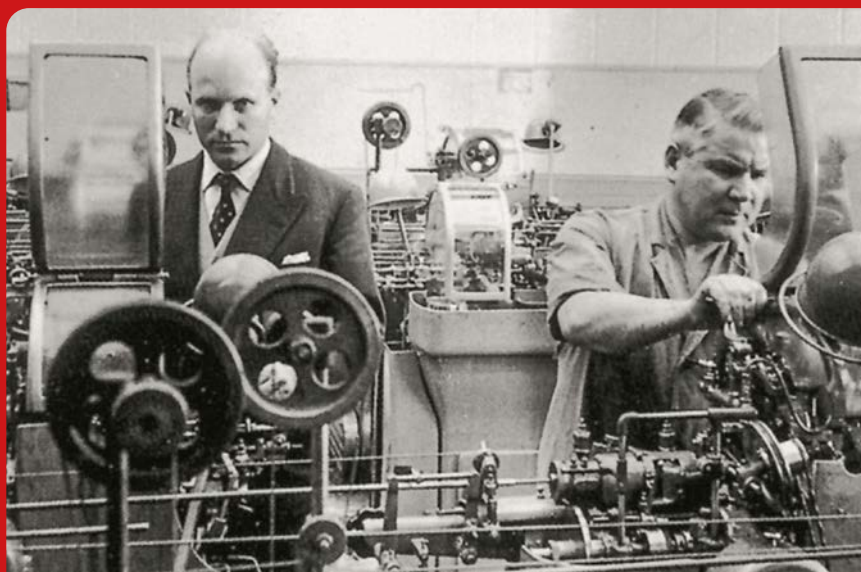
It was also in the mid-1950s that Marcel Bich ephemerally married Jacqueline de Dufourcq. They had a daughter, Isabelle. Marcel Bich then married Laurence Courier de Méré.

They had six children: Antoine, Marie-Aimée, Marie-Charlotte, Marie-Henriette, Marie-Pauline, and Xavier. They all worked at the company at one time or another.

In 1967, in order to continue to integrate the different manufacturing stages of its products, Bic took over Sobitu (Société de Balles et Tubes), which supplies the ballpoints and tubes containing the ink for the pens. Taking control of the entire molding process allows Bic to achieve a very low cost price. The tubes, which used to be purchased for 140,000 old francs per kilo from Rhône Poulenc, would only cost 25,000.

<sup>1</sup> Bar turning is a machining technique where material used to create rotating parts is removed to achieve high productivity and precision.

Marcel Bich in the workshops at  
Impasse des Cailloux, 1955  
(Col. JDF/O. Médias).







1962: Brazil, São Paulo, avenue Mofarrej, expansion of the Bic factory.



Marcel Bich, in 1959, back from Gothenburg (Sweden).





# International Debut

The internationalization of the company was extremely quick. In the decade after the creation of Bic Cristal, the brand established itself in Europe, Brazil, countries in the sterling area, and on the African continent. Depending on the market and situation, Marcel Bich would proceed with the internationalization in one of two ways: by creating commercial subsidiaries or even factories in certain key countries, or by acquiring local companies that have a strong distribution network or good industrial tools.

# First steps on the European continent

*Advertisement for the retractable pen, designed by Savignac for the Belgian market, in 1958. The slogan means "flexible writing".*

Marcel Bich set out to develop his company internationally from early stages. In 1951, a year after launching the Bic Cristal, the pen was exported for sale in Belgium, where he sold nearly three and a half million pens in one year. In 1954, an important step was taken when Marcel Bich opened a factory

in Milan, Italy, in order to avoid excessively high customs duties, as the European common market did not yet exist. After a year of activity, the factory had 200 workers. Even though numerous poor-quality reproductions of the Bic Cristal flooded the Italian market, none could compare to the original Cristal. BIC continued to make a name for itself and the activity of the Milan factory continued to grow. It would remain one of the most important factories of the group for a long time, and the only one, with the factory in Clichy, to manufacture molds for pens and automatic machines.

Also in 1954, Marcel Bich set up a manufacturing unit in Barcelona, Spain. This was done through a license agreement from the Spanish and Portuguese markets, solidified by one of Marcel's relatives, Roger Laforest. It is also with Roger Laforest that Bic would later arrange for the distribution of lighters to French tobacco stores.

In 1956, Bic-Lugano was created, a distribution company for Switzerland, while Bic products gradually entered the Netherlands and Austria. Germany would prove to be more difficult to enter and remained refractory to the French ballpoint pen for a long time.



# The Biro patent and the lawsuit against Bic

In 1957, Bic bought the company Biro-Swan. This acquisition settled a complex story: indeed, in 1952, Henry George Martin, holder of the Biro patents, accused Bic of counterfeiting. To grasp the implications of this trial and measure the importance of the takeover of Biro-Swan in 1957, we need to go back a few years.

In 1942, Henry George Martin, a British citizen living in Argentina, met László József Bíró, a Hungarian who had emigrated to escape Nazism shortly before World War II after having developed a patent for a refillable ballpoint pen. Bíró was not the first to have the idea of using a ballpoint to deliver ink: indeed, in 1888, the American John Loud had patented a pen whose writing tip had a metal ballpoint. But it was technically faulty. He began selling his pens through his small company, Everpen, which quickly went bankrupt.

It was then that he met Henry George Martin, who bought 50% of his company, as well as its patents. Martin quickly managed to sell a few thousand copies of the Biro pen to the Royal Air Force.

He then founded the company Miles-Martin Pen in London which, after the takeover of Mable Todd & Co. Ltd, manufacturer of the Swan fountain pen, became Biro-Swan.

At the same time, and even though the patents for the Biro pen are still held by Martin, through the Switzerland-based company Biro Patente AG, several companies had begun to market ballpoint pens without a license.

To remedy this, Martin decided to initiate several lawsuits – including one against Bic in 1952. This resulted in a judgment in

favor of the plaintiff. Bic was ordered to pay Biro Patente AG one and a half million francs on a provisional basis. Marcel Bich appealed the decision, but, since it was not enforceable, he continued to produce and market his model, expecting a conciliation to be found soon – taking a risk that strongly shows the pragmatism and entrepreneurial spirit of Marcel Bich! The day before the appeal hearing, he arranged a meeting with Henry George Martin and convinced Martin to grant him an operating license: thus, the English entrepreneur would benefit from his success. Martin accepted. Therefore, for five years, Bic paid one million francs in royalties to Biro-Swan.



László Bíró (Budapest 1899  
- Buenos Aires 1985).

**"I had expected to sell 10,000 pencils a day. In less than three years, we reached the amount of 200 to 250,000. The success was such that it looked to me like we should not wait to tackle foreign markets."**

*Marcel Bich, interview granted to L'Expansion, February 1969.*

# The purchase of Biro-Swan

Finally, in 1957, Marcel Bich was able to buy Biro-Swan, its patents, and its factory. For a billion and a half old francs – still, a small fortune – the British company officially changed hands. This acquisition was crucial, since it allowed Marcel Bich to control 60% of the ballpoint pen market in Great Britain, but also in the entire sterling area: Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, as well as all of English-speaking Africa. This is the promise of amazing development.

A year after being bought by Bic, Biro-Swan acquired 80% of the shares of the Swedish

company Ballograf, which controlled all of the Nordic markets: Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark.

We cannot end the “Biro saga” without specifying that the history of the company meets the family history: indeed, one of Henry George Martin’s sons, John, married one of Marcel Bich’s daughters, Marie-Caroline, a few years later. They went to live in Argentina.

*English advertisement for the Biro Magnum refillable ballpoint pen released in 1958, one year after the company Biro-Swan was taken over by Bic.*

**“The biggest producer is well placed to make a profit, the second has less of a chance, the third can still hope, the fourth is more likely to lose than to win.”**

*Marcel Bich*



**And now, by Biro**  
the brilliant new  
*Magnum*  
at **18/6**  
U.K. PRICE ONLY

**New long-life refill**  
The Magnum's entirely new kind of refill holds almost twice as much ink — famous Blue-66, of course — for the longest-ever life of smudge-proof, flawless writing.

**And a most handsome pen**  
In its presentation case the Magnum, with gleaming tarnish-proof cap and fittings, is the finest Biro (and that means the finest ball-point) ever made.  
Remember — Biro *invented* the ballpoint.

Refills for the Magnum cost 2/2½

**Buy Biro — it's right on the ball**  
2348-1

## Establishment in Brazil

At the beginning of June 1956, only six years after the launch of Bic Cristal, Marcel Bich flew to Brazil, determined to conquer this great country that promised successful development. He had never been there before – and would never go there again – he did not speak the language, but that did not matter: taking risks is part of the job. As was always the case with Marcel Bich, business went smoothly: on July 15, a commercial subsidiary, the Bic Industria Esferografica Brasileira, was created in São Paulo and Michel Pingéot – a brilliant young agronomist whom Marcel Bich asked to have on the trip – was appointed director. He would be assisted on site by Henri Robin. As the administrative complications were a commonplace in the country, the company did not really start its activity until the beginning of the 1960s.

In the meantime, still, the construction of a factory was launched in São Paulo and Michel Pingéot was struggling to obtain import licenses that would allow to transport the machines from Europe. In 1961, the first pens were manufactured in Brazil and Michel Pingéot himself delivered them, driving the company's Kombi. Packaged in boxes of 50, the Cristal immediately met its target audience. Production increased rapidly. Marcel Bich, who understood the importance of the Brazilian market, both in terms of its size and its adherence to the brand's products, decided to incorporate all the profits made in the country into the share capital of Bic Industria Esferografica Brasileira. There it was in a position to enter the sub-continent, whose potential seemed just as promising.

*Start of production at the São Paulo plant in 1960. We see that part of the assembly is still done manually.*





# Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay: other lands for South American conquests

Brazil was not the only country in South America where Marcel Bich sought to establish his brand. From the early 1960s, his pens were already exported to the four corners of the continent: Chile, Ecuador, Uruguay, Panama, Peru, El Salvador, Paraguay, Guatemala, Costa Rica, as well as in the Dutch lands in the region. Bic would have sales agents in these countries, who will partially manufacture its products. Of course, Argentina also proved to be unavoidable. Although Bic pens were sold there as early as 1962, it was not until 1967 that the company really established itself there.

In this country, where the word “biro” is used to designate a ballpoint pen, in homage to László Biró, Marcel Bich joined forces with a certain Mr. Falabella, to create a commercial joint venture: “Bic Argentina”. Falabella, who already held the Faber Castel license, knew the world of stationery well. Argentina would soon be selling a Bic Cristal with an opaque, blue body, like the ink in ballpoint pens. Baptized Opaco, it would be all the rage and even today it is still an iconic product.

*Michel Pinget, Douglas Ribas, and Henri Robin, the three architects behind the development of the Bic brand in Latin America, photographed here in the 1970s.*



**“The Bic Cristal is the only example of achieved socialism, because it annuls all property rights and all social distinctions.”**

*Umberto Eco*

# Bic in Africa and the Middle East: an real epic tale

Jean-René Luc, Marcel Bich's brother-in-law, was in charge of setting up Bic in Africa. He regularly traveled to certain countries on the continent aboard a small plane in the brand's colors, a twin-engine Piper Apache called "La Pointe Bic". Reaching the towns outskirts, the plane dropped hundreds of advertising brochures which swirled in the air before falling to the ground. Jean-René Luc then hurried to land to meet shopkeepers and booksellers, present the Bic items, and get orders! The company also hired "multi-card" representatives, as was done at the time, who were paid by comission and mainly traveled through French-speaking countries.

The only country in Africa where Bic has an industrial facility is South Africa. The factory, located in Johannesburg, was created by Biro-Swan, which Marcel Bich bought in 1957. In the 1960s, Bic reconsidered its strategy and decided to have its products manufactured on site, granting licenses to certain distributors. Local production promoted Bic's reputation on the continent, and the brand would soon become immensely popular. From the 1970s, Bic joined forces with CFAO (Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale) to produce locally in five countries: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, and Egypt. These countries would be used as "platforms" and export their production to their neighboring countries.

*Aboard the twin-engine Piper Apache or an advertising truck, Jean-René Luc, Marcel Bich's brother-in-law, travels the African continent to publicize the Bic brand and products.*



# Setting up internationally: a pragmatic strategy

To finish this overview of the internationalization of Bic during the 1950s, and before recalling the great American adventure, it is important to highlight the acquisition of the Swedish company Ballograf, manufacturer of writing instruments, in 1959. This transaction, carried out without the aid of banks and financed with Bic Biro's own funds, opened the doors to Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark, where Ballograf had a well-established commercial network. Thus, it completes the conquest of the European continent.

At that time, the international development of Bic was based both on high-performance factories, which led to the company receiving

an Oscar for exports in 1958, and an increasingly string policy of acquiring brands and companies. This enabled the group to focus on and promote its establishment in certain key countries. Marcel Bich was pragmatic: depending on the situation, a subsidiary was created, a distribution agreement was negotiated, or a company was bought out. This is how, eager to settle in the United States, Marcel Bich understood that the most effective strategy consisted of acquiring an American brand. The opportunity came to him in 1958 with the Waterman Pen company, opening a new chapter for Bic that would forever change the course of its history.

*In 1958, Marcel Bich received the Oscar for Outstanding Exporter from Antoine Pinay, Minister of Finance and former Chairman of the Council.*

**"Marcel Bich surrounded himself with men in the field and was wary of planning technocrats. He liked to mischievously remind us that the word management includes "manus", the hand. For him, nothing replaced experience and a sense of what is concrete."**

*Laurence Bich*







The export is organized from the 1950s. Here, boxes leaving for Milan, Damascus, Dakar, Johannesburg, or even Saigon, are loaded onto a dead end forklift from Impasse des Cailloux factory in Clichy-la-Garenne in 1965.

*The Waterman Bic Pen Corporation was established in Seymour, Connecticut (USA), from 1958 to 1963.*



*Assembly lines at the new site in Milford (Connecticut) in 1965.*



*In the United States, Bic was pushing its differentiation strategy in points of sale.*

# The Conquest of the Americas

After having conquered the European and the Commonwealth markets, after settling in Brazil and establishing a foothold in Africa and the Middle East, Marcel Bich turned to America. The sale of Waterman USA seemed to him to be a perfect opportunity to establish himself on the North American continent. Reality turned out to be more bitter and difficult, and Marcel Bich would need plenty of tenacity, pragmatism, and responsiveness for the American business to become a success. Listed on the stock exchange in 1970, the North American subsidiary Bic Corp. would also subsequently be the bridgehead for the group's development in Central America.



# Setting foot in the United States: the purchase of Waterman in 1958

In 1958, Bic was seeing exponential growth and, particularly since the purchase of Biro-Swan, it was present in many countries around the world. However, one unreached territory was the United States. But the United States missed the call: the country put in place so many tariffs that to export. Thus, for an item that would give the factory a profit of three cents, six cents would go to customs duties!

However, it could not reasonably do without the American market: Marcel Bich, for whom international deployment is one of the keys – even THE key – to success, was chomping at the bit while waiting for an opportunity to present itself. This finally occurred in December 1958, when he learned that 60% of the shares of Waterman USA were for sale, for a million dollars. This immediately sparked Marcel's interest; by acquiring an American company, Bic would be able to expand to the American continent. The group would also be able to accelerate its growth in Africa and the Middle East, where the Waterman Pen Company was well established.

Without hesitation, Marcel Bich got on the plane, took a look at the balance sheets, and immediately signed a sales agreement. Then he left the lawyers to work out the details of the contract and returned to France. He suspected that, for such a price, Waterman's situation must be far from excellent. Truth be told, it was downright bad. First, the balance sheet revealed that the sale was borderline legal – it had been "fixed". Then, most importantly, Marcel Bich realized that the Waterman name actually closed more doors for him than it opened; the brand's fountain pens worked poorly and had a very bad reputation. The general public purposefully avoided them. Marcel Bich understood that he would have to change his tune...

**BIC BALL POINT PENS**  
GUARANTEED TO WRITE FIRST TIME - EVERY TIME!

*No Skip* 

*No Smear* 

*No Clog* 

*Less Cost* 

 **BIC**  
DIVISION OF Waterman

**WORLD'S  
LARGEST  
PEN  
MANUFACTURER!**

Form S-463

WATERMAN - BIC PEN CORPORATION, SEYMOUR, CONN.

MANUFACTURING PLANTS IN:  
U.S.A. (Seymour, Conn.) - FRANCE - ENGLAND - AUSTRALIA - NEW ZEALAND - IRELAND - CHILE - ARGENTINA  
SPAIN - PORTUGAL - BRAZIL - SOUTH AFRICA - ITALY - SWEDEN - F. GUIANA - URUGUAY - AUSTRIA

*American advertisement for Bic products, early 1960s. We see that the brand is still presented as a division of Waterman.*

# The laborious conquest of the North American market

During the first few years, losses were very significant. Each year, Marcel Bich had to invest several million francs, with no light on the horizon. Not sparing his trouble, he went to New York for a week at a time every month for more than four years. He finally decided not to exhaust himself *"repairing the old Waterman castle"*, but to focus on building a business that would be *"exclusively Bic"*. He also chose to divide the territory of the United States into five zones, in an effort to focus the financial capabilities in advertising and sales in particular, on one zone per year. *"The work on a phase lasted a year, during which we lost 500 million francs. But after the first year, sales were going up, and the third year, we had a profit,"* he said. A new advertising campaign, launched in 1962 with a skater as its emblem, made a lasting impression. At the same time, Marcel Bich decided to lower the price of Bic Cristal, which was between the "brand name" and the "no name", that is to say, too expensive to establish itself when the brand was not known yet. Marcel Bich's perseverance eventually paid off: the American subsidiary, whose management was entrusted to the young Robert Adler in 1959, made its first profits in 1963. That same year, it set up a production site in Milford, Connecticut, a factory that, ten years later, would have no fewer than 600 employees. With 135 million units sold in 1965, Bic ballpoint pens began to establish themselves and gradually

replaced the Waterman brand pens, which were sold in 1971 to Waterman France. At the same time, the arrival on the market of writing felt pens, invented by the Japanese, paradoxically turned out to be favorable: all American competitors were monopolized by this new product, the profitability of which was deemed to be greater than that of the ballpoint pen, and Bic was free to consolidate its position and gain ground.

Advertisement from the 1960s illustrating the launch phases of Bic in the United States, zone by zone.






# The entry of Bic Corp. to Wall Street

Although encouraging, the turnover achieved by the North American subsidiary Bic Corp. was still insufficient. Marcel Bich was still bailing out the million-dollar losses for several years. *"If I had had shareholders,"* he once said in an interview, *"it is likely that they would have had me locked up in Charenton<sup>1</sup> include explanation, after losing 3 or 4 million. Because, I have to say, we risked not succeeding."*

Until 1970, investments intended for the development of Bic Corp. were therefore only made from the profits of the company in Europe, without the banks' help. However, in order to develop new products, and thus better face major American and Japanese competitors, it was becoming urgent to significantly increase funding. Against all odds, and, above all, against his principles, Marcel Bich decided in 1971 to join the stock market. The operation went very well: the price of the 650,000 shares, representing 20% of the capital of Bic Corp., progressed satisfactorily. The first attempt turned out to be a stroke of genius. The following year, Marcel Bich repeated the operation on a larger scale, this time introducing 20% of the Bic group onto the Paris Stock Exchange.

<sup>1</sup> Former French psychiatric hospital

PROSPECTUS



655,000 Shares  
**BIC Pen Corporation**  
Common Shares  
(\$1.00 Par Value)

The Common Shares offered hereby are being sold by the shareholders named herein under "Selling Shareholders." BIC Pen Corporation will not receive any of the proceeds from the sale of Common Shares offered hereby.

Prior to this offering, there has been no public market for the Common Shares of BIC Pen Corporation. The initial offering price has been determined by agreement among the Underwriters and the Selling Shareholders. BIC Pen Corporation intends to apply for listing of its Common Shares on the American Stock Exchange as soon as practicable following this offering.

**THESE SECURITIES HAVE NOT BEEN APPROVED OR DISAPPROVED BY THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION NOR HAS THE COMMISSION PASSED UPON THE ACCURACY OR ADEQUACY OF THIS PROSPECTUS. ANY REPRESENTATION TO THE CONTRARY IS A CRIMINAL OFFENSE.**

	Price to Public	Underwriting Discounts and Commissions(1)	Proceeds to Selling Shareholders(2)
Per Share .....	\$25.00	\$1.55	\$23.45
Total (3).....	\$16,375,000	\$1,015,250	\$15,359,750

(1) See "Underwriting" for indemnification arrangements.  
(2) Before deducting expenses estimated at \$180,000, payable by the Selling Shareholders.  
(3) Assumes that all 10,000 shares being offered to employees and others are purchased.

Included in this offering are 10,000 shares offered by the Selling Shareholders on a pro rata basis which the Underwriters have agreed to sell to employees and other persons designated by the Company. Any shares not purchased by such persons will not be offered to the general public and will not be sold as part of this offering.

These shares are being offered by the several Underwriters named herein subject to prior sale, when, as and if delivered to and accepted by the Underwriters, subject to approval of certain legal matters by counsel and subject to certain other conditions.

**White, Weld & Co. SoGen International Corporation**

The date of this Prospectus is September 15, 1971.

Prospectus for the initial public offering of Bic Corp. in 1971.

**"Do you know surfing? Well, that's my method. Success requires the absolute control of the board, complete freedom of movement, and not having shareholders and bankers stepping on the board. This surfing policy is very sports-oriented, very interesting to carry out, and there are times when you are afraid, but it is exciting."**

*Marcel Bich*

# The arrival of Bruno Bich as the head of Bic Corp.

After its initial public offering and the arrival of the Bic lighter and razor to the American market, which were fierce competitors of well-established brands, Bic Corp. saw its growth begin to slow down. In 1982, its securities were worth only three dollars on the New York Stock Exchange compared to 25 in 1975. It was time to raise the bar! Marcel Bich appointed his son Bruno as head of the American subsidiary. The latter, who worked at Bic Corp. for several years, was quickly making some major changes. He overhauled the organizational chart, placed production under the direction of his brothers Claude and François, and abandoned the purely geographical approach of the organization in favor of an approach that was based on product categories. In terms of distribution, it included the spectacular concentration of the stationery sector, which went from a network of 13,000 wholesalers to less than 1,000 retailers, mainly large brands. Bruno Bich maintained a relationship of trust with the distribution giant Walmart. During the 80s and 90s, the American experience inspired the other subsidiaries of the group in terms of marketing and distribution: gradually, they implemented, in their own markets, differentiation strategies inspired by those deployed by Bic Corp.

For Bruno Bich, this crossover of business practices is obvious: *"I truly believe in combining European design culture with American efficiency culture,"* he says.

*Bruno Bich set his eyes on the United States very early on. After studying finance and marketing in New York, he worked in an investment bank before joining the family business in 1975.*



# The promotional products market: Bic Graphic



It is also under the leadership of Bruno Bich that Bic Graphic USA was developed, the core business that offered Bic pens or lighters as promotional materials. It quickly became very popular with major brands who wished to purchase corporate gifts or goodies personalized with their name and colors.

The venture first began in France in 1969: Marcel Bich had understood that large companies would be interested in taking advantage of the quality image conveyed by Bic products. This was duly noted. While business was doing well on both sides of the Atlantic, it had been developing faster and more significantly in the United States. Initially named "Special Market Division", before becoming Bic Graphic USA, the American entity had several advantages: first, the extremely short delivery times – eight days to receive the requested products, who could do better?

Second, the perfectly mastered marking technologies (pad printing, material effects, etc.), that constitute Bic's industrial knowledge even today.

During the 2000s, the activity of Bic Graphic USA was reinforced by the successive purchases of Atchison Products, a supplier of promotional use bags, in 2007, and Norwood Promotional Products in 2009. That same year, Bic finalized the acquisition of Antalis Promotional Products in Europe. However, the evolution of the American market towards lower-cost advertising and branding products made the development of the subsidiary increasingly difficult, and almost all of North American activities of Bic Graphic were officially sold in 2017. However, the creation of promotional items continued in Europe with a plant dedicated to customization, located in Spain.

Each company has its own Bic! Bic pens adapt to all tastes and become promotional tools. Opposite, an advertisement for the launch of the Promotional Products activity in France in the 1970s. Above, the Bic 4 Colors takes on the colors of the Élysée Palace in 2018. At the bottom, the lighter with the Bon Marché logo.



**Ce sont des gens de goût...  
...puisque ce sont vos clients !**

Adressez-leur un ambassadeur digne de votre firme, un cadeau de marque connue, dont le renom viendra s'ajouter au vôtre.

Pour une clientèle nombreuse et variée, le BIC-Cristal ou le BIC-Opaque.

Pour une clientèle aux goûts classiques, le BIC-Poche M.3, ou le BIC-Poche M.4.

Pour une clientèle jeune et dynamique, le BIC-Amortisseur ou le BIC-Clic.

Pour ceux qui "ont la signature", le Super-BIC, le plus racé des stylos à bille.

**BIC**



# The development of Central America and Latin America

During the 1970s and 1980s, the North American subsidiary Bic Corp. began to establish the brand in Central America, a natural geographic and economic extension of the United States. A 4,600 m<sup>2</sup> factory was built in Mexico at the end of 1973 in partnership with the José Bejar company, a leader in the country's stationery industry. Production started in 1974, and the first sales were made in 1975.

At the same time, in 1974, Bic Corp. was exporting writing instruments and lighters to Honduras, Ecuador, Colombia, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. The Bic Guatemala subsidiary, opened in 1975, was placed under the direct responsibility of the American company.

Meanwhile, Brazil continued to develop. In 1973, when the lighter was launched on the French market, Bic acquired Tecnocério, a company based in Manaus and dedicated to the production of flints for lighters. In 1974, the lighter was launched on the Brazilian market. In the 80s, it was from Brazil that Bic developed new activities in South America where several subsidiaries had been established. It was there that a general management for the subcontinent was appointed in 1993.

In 2002, Tecnocério – renamed Bic Amazônia – welcome all Bic production dedicated to the Latin American market, whether stationery, lighters, or razors, into its factory. Then, in 2004, thanks to the reorganization of the group orchestrated by Bruno Bich, Central America until then piloted by Bic Corp. would be merged with South America to form a new Latin America zone.

*The Cuatitlán plant in Mexico has a production area of more than 34,000 m<sup>2</sup> and manufactures stationery items, mainly for from North America and the local Mexican market.*



# Letter from Marcel Bich to shareholders (1973)

On November 15, 1972, 20% of Bic group's capital was listed on the Paris Stock Exchange. Priced at 650 francs, the share was in strong demand and, after a week of trading, the price was balanced around 880 francs.

What made this operation so interesting was that it marked both an evolution and permanence in Marcel Bich's entrepreneurial spirit. By selling part of the capital, Marcel Bich accomplished what he had, until then, always refused to consider, believing that the presence external shareholders would be a terrible attack on his freedom of decision. However, by setting up equity financing rather than debt financing, he was able to remain faithful to his wish of developing without the banks' help. Make way for risk-taking, resolute and convinced!

On June 4, 1973, on the occasion of the company's first General Meeting, Marcel Bich wrote a letter to his new shareholders to explain to them how he *"conceives his conduct"*.

He summarizes the three essential points of his "doctrine". The first was risk: *"The gain is proportional to the risk; the more you risk, the more likely you are to win... or lose."* The second was trust in individual responsibility. Hence a *"fiercely anti-technocratic"* posture, according to his now famous formula. Finally, the third point expressed the importance of maintaining an international presence, because *"business can only resist on a global scale."*

This uncompromising speech by a rather discreet entrepreneur in the media, embraced a concise and very explicit analysis that is now part of his history and his heritage. Above all, it is still the company's strategic compass.





## Letter from Marcel BICH to the shareholders

"Annual Meeting, June 4th, 1973"

*Dear Shareholders:*

*On the occasion of this first annual meeting of our company after its introduction on the Paris Bourse on November 15, 1972, I would like to tell you how I conceive its philosophy and management.*

*This philosophy was designed during the last twenty years when after having created the Company, I managed it. It is not the result of a formal education received in a business school, American or French, it is the result of the tough school of business which I entered at 18 years old by the smallest door. Nobody will deny me the title of moneymaker as our company started in 1953 with a capital of 10,000 francs and today has a capital of 150 million francs through internally generated funds. This progress represents an approximate doubling of the capital each year for 20 years.*

*This development is based on risk. The gain is proportional to the risk. The more you risk the more you have the chance to win -- or lose. The practical solution: cover the risk totally from the start and then you can only win. This explains why you will not find in our balance sheet medium or short term debt, a rare thing in our time when the devaluation of money makes the temptation to borrow great.*

*The second basis of our philosophy is to have confidence in and give responsibility to individuals. We are ferociously anti-technocratic. One does not maintain the price of a product over a long period of time by establishing price control but by increasing productivity. Technocracy is a sickness of our time; starting at the top, it spreads to all levels and results in a mass of consultants, assistants and organizers but when it comes to "doing the work" there is nobody. This technocracy generates a high cost of production and what is worse, makes the people apathetic. As a result, they become bored in their work and lose their initiative. The opposite happens when management places its confidence in its employees at every level.*

*The task is to infuse this philosophy into all people and to practice it at all levels as the Company becomes multinational and diversifies.*

SOCIÉTÉ BIC

Marcel BICH  
Président Directeur Général



# Another World History

At the turn of the 70s, Marcel Bich decided to develop a new product, which he considered perfectly suited to the “Bic model”: the pocket lighter. After taking over the company Flaminaire in 1971 and, under the leadership of Francois Bich, production lighters in the Redon factory was standardized as much as possible. In 1973, Bic launched its first pocket lighter, revolutionizing the industry by providing the consumer 3,000 lights! The Bic lighter quickly became a world bestseller.

# The lighter: a product representing the Bic model

Bic's Lighter activity began at the turn of the 1970s, born from intuition coupled with opportunity: the intuition that the pocket lighter offered an interesting possibility of launching mass production with a product for daily use; the opportunity to buy the company Flaminaire.

Founded in 1946 in Redon, in Brittany, by Marcel Quercia, the inventor of the gas lighter, it had established know-how in this area.

*This advertisement for the first Bic lighter praises the ergonomics of the item with a catchy slogan: "Your hand will make the difference!"*

Let us recall here that France has an interesting history and a practiced expertise in the manufacturing of lighters, which dates back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with other iconic brands, such as Feudor.

In fact, Marcel Bich's interest in lighters was piqued in 1960, when the company Dupont launched the first non-refillable lighter under the Cricket brand. Marcel Bich was convinced that this was a product that aligned with the "Bic model" in all respects: a consumer product, easy to mass produce, and which can be distributed anywhere in the world.

However, at this time, the finances of the company had to support the development of the pen. He never forgot his dreams of this new endeavor, and vowed to strike when the time was right.

His patience paid off: ten years later, Cricket landed in trouble. After learning that Gillette aimed to buy Cricket, Marcel Bich strikes: without ever having seen the balance sheets, he immediately approached the French authorities to buy Cricket under the same conditions as Gillette. His proposal was rejected on the grounds that "Bic is not built for such activity."

**NOUVEAU**  
**briquet**  **BIC®**  
**EXTRA-PLAT**

**avec son clapet rouge**



• Sa molette est particulièrement douce;  
• EXTRA-PLAT: le corps du briquet s'adapte parfaitement le creux de votre main;  
• Son clapet rouge permet un meilleur appui de votre pouce et vous assure plus de 3 000 allumages sans aucune détérioration;  
• Existe en blanc - bleu "glacé" - jaune "caneton" - vert émeraude et orange "sable".

**4,75F**  
seulement

**Votre main fera la différence!**

PH. THOMAS - GARET

**"The lighter is a very demanding product. We accepted the challenge to become the world champions and we succeeded."**

*Francois Bich*

# Launch of the first Bic lighter

Not a problem! Marcel Bich would not miss his chance. Pragmatic, he decided to bring together the best skills to create a competitor to Cricket, which had ultimately been acquired by Gillette. In 1971, he bought the company Flaminaire, which created the first gas lighters in France. He then hired an expert in sparkwheel from Spain and acquired a company that produced flint lighters, Electro-centre, in France. This being done, Marcel Bich appointed his son François, who was 24 years old, to head the new activity. The latter said: *"I applied to the Lighters category what I saw my father and Mr. Buffard had done in the Ballpoint Pens category. What we wanted was to have perfect control over the quality of our products and their cost price. This involved simplifying the lighter itself in order to focus on the essentials, what we call the 'engine' of the product."*

Two years later, once each part had been studied down to the smallest detail, the quality and strength of the materials had

been reviewed, the machines had been purchased, and the production processes had been fine-tuned, the J1 (maxi model with adjustable flame) was launched. This pocket lighter with a plastic body and a red pusher was accompanied by an advertising campaign with a catchy slogan: *"Your hand will make the difference."*

*After having been a production agent at the Impasse des Cailloux factory since he was 20, François Bich was sent to Redon by his father in 1971 following the takeover of Flaminaire. He would lead the Lighters category until 2015.*



Watch a film on how  
Bic lighters are made  
(duration: 5 mins)



# The ingredients for success

*Factory quality and safety control operations for Bic lighters are essential steps in the manufacturing process.*

In the Redon factory, François Bich focused on *"associating the best of Flaminare with the best of Bic"*, and in particular his experience of mass production. In order to increase productivity and improve costs while staying ahead of the competition, François Bich internalized each stage of the manufacturing process as much as possible.

Very quickly, the Redon plant mastered plastic molding, cold stamping, Zamac injection (an alloy of zinc, aluminum, magnesium, and copper) and surface treatment. Bar turning was replaced by cold forging and numerically controlled machines were entering the workshops.

In order to protect the company's technological advance and to guarantee production consistency world-wide, most of the tools were designed and developed by Bic teams. Quality and safety were top priorities. A lighter consists of a plastic reservoir containing pressurized gas, complete with an ignition system. If it is not designed and manufactured according to the highest safety standards, the use of a lighter can be dangerous and lead to serious consequences. This is a top concern at the end of the 1980s, when Bic was implicated in the United States in 156 lawsuits accusing the products of being dangerous – *"destabilization maneuvers of a sometimes fierce competition"* said Bruno Bich, of the lawsuits. Although 153 of these lawsuits were won (Bic lighters were cleared), the company needed to take steps to regain the trust of its customers. In particular, it made a point of demonstrating that most of the accidents that occurred were due to "low cost" lighters, which absolutely did not observe safety standards.



**"It is a virtuous circle: producing higher quality at a lower price ensures a lead in the markets and, therefore, mass distribution."**

*Francois Bich*

# Mini, Slim, Megalighter: Bic lights up the world!

In 1985, with the launch of the "Mini", weighing 11.5 grams and measuring 6.2 cm in height, Bic began to expand its range... and conquer the world while doing so. The "classic" lighter was renamed to the "Maxi", and the sales pitch focused on the number of flames it could produce: while a standard lighter on the market offered an average of 800 flames, the Bic Mini provided 1,450 and the Maxi 3,000! Significant longevity.

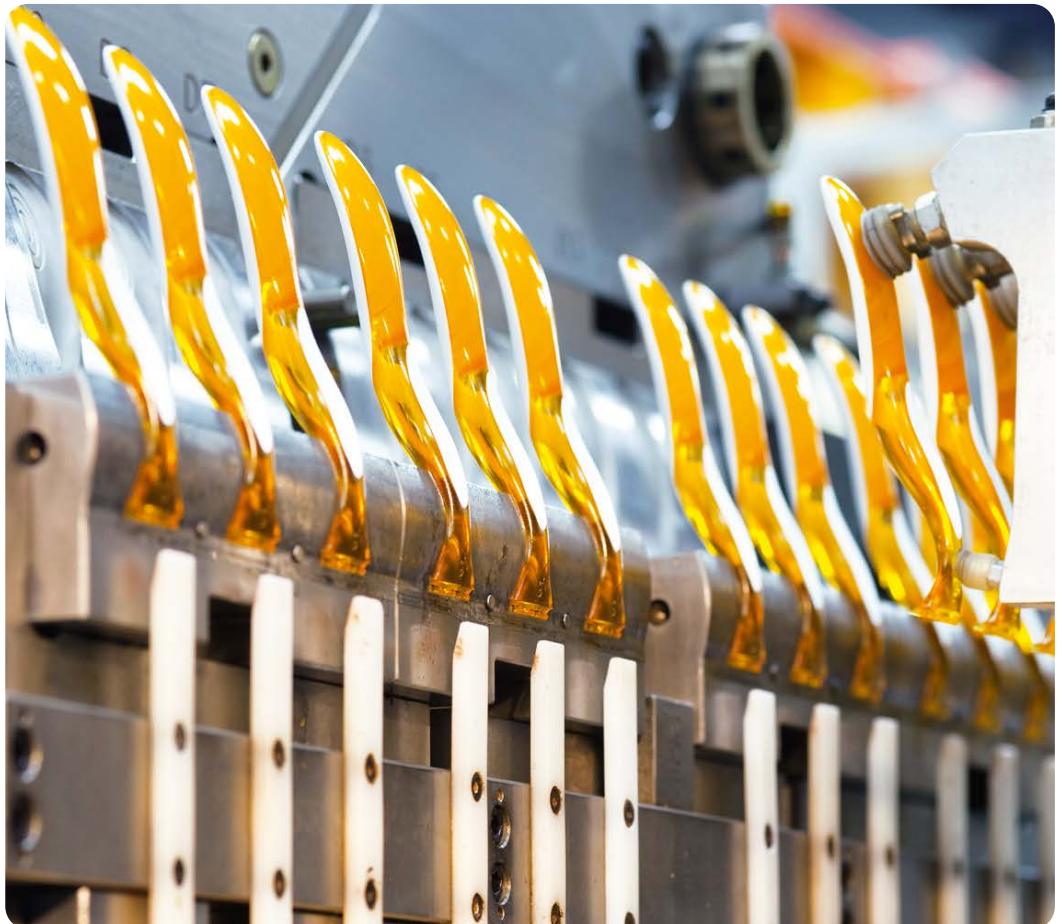
In 1992, the Mini and the Maxi were joined by a Slim model, which had the same diameter as the Mini, but the height of the Maxi. The Slim model had been preceded in 1991 by a model with electronic ignition. Finally, in 2000, Bic launched consumer utility lighters intended for domestic use: thanks to their long wand, they allow one to light candles, gas burners, or a barbecue, at least 750 times and in complete safety. As with the Bic pens and razors, the lighters were backed by advertising that was always inventive and cheerful. One example of this is the hugely successful "Flick your Bic" campaign that launched in the United States in 1975. The slogan – created by an agency working for Bic New Zealand – was taken up by many celebrities on TV sets. Bic's market share was soaring.

In order to respond to consumer desires for novelty and differentiation, while also preventing its lighters from being confined to simple "commodity products", Bic used the body of the lighter as a canvas, for graphic expression. Starting in 1990, thousands of different limited-edition lighters were developed, with themes ranging from animals, monuments, sports teams, and more.

*Bic lighters come in different sizes, colors, and designs to meet consumers' needs and desire of novelty.*







Above, factory quality test on the Bic razor.

Opposite, overview of a step in the Bic Soleil razor molding line.

# Third Pillar of Success

Ignoring the pessimistic projections that shook the economy in the aftermath of the first oil shock, Marcel Bich tackled the shaving market. Similar to the pen and the lighter, thorough research took place to ensure the mastery of the shaver's industrial excellence. Quickly sold all over the world, the razor was adopted by a wide range of consumers, becoming a fan-favorite among women. Thanks to its excellent quality-price ratio and ever-bolder advertising campaigns, it imposed itself on many markets, making its competitor Gillette tremble.

# The one-piece razor: an unprecedented innovation

At the same time as the launch of the lighter, Marcel Bich was considering another diversification path: the razor! He wanted this new, everyday object to be safe, practical, and accessible to everyone. But since he did not know anything about the industry, he first had to find a supplier of blades.

It was in Greece, on the outskirts of Athens, that the businessman found his manufacturer. Founded in 1952, Violex maintained a good reputation.

In 1974, Bic took a 44% stake in its capital and launched a challenge to its operators: to manufacture a complete razor, including the handle, for the price of a single blade. It was thus at the price of 80 centimes of a franc that the Classic – the first razor with an integrated blade – came onto the French market in 1975. It was a one-piece razor with a half-blade and a light white plastic handle, designed as an emergency item for consumers in “developed” countries. Intrigued by this product, which does not need to be refilled, the French bought seven million in the first year!

From 1976, part of the shavers assembly would be carried out on the Longueil-Sainte-Marie site in the Oise, which opened in 1973. Originally intended for writing felt – a product that ultimately remained within the scope of Sobitu in Montreuil due to moderate demand – the factory directed by Claude Bich was equipped with a new generation of high-performance cam assembly machines. Established in 1973 in the heart of the Amazon, the Bic factory in Manaus, Brazil, would also manufacture razors. Greece, which passed on its precious know-how to the French teams, would remain an essential link in the manufacture and innovation of the razor. In 2000, Violex fully entered the Bic umbrella. Today, Greece is home to a state-of-the-art razor factory and Research & Development center.



Advertising of the first razor  
Single-blade Bic, France, 1975.



Being in the company since he was 18, Claude Bich was in charge of the industrial development of the Writing and Shavers categories until his death in 1996. In particular, he had to his credit the design of production machines that have been crucial in the success of Bic.



# The American Resistance Organizes

As soon as it arrived on the US market in the fall of 1976, the Bic razor was met with great success. In the span of two years, sales rose from 32 million to 192 million units. Worried by this exponential growth, Gillette, which had invented the interchangeable blade razor at the beginning of the century, released its own non-refillable razor in a hurry and took BIC to court.

The American company wanted to prove that it had invented the chemical processes that allowed the edge of the blade to harden and facilitate its sliding over the skin. Marcel Bich quickly understood that he would not be able to win his case against the sector's giant, supported by the powerful Federal Trade Commission. Tired of wasting his time before the courts and being stopped in his conquest of the American market, he finally consented to the payment of a lump sum.

Marcel Bich, who also lamented the very limited functionality of rechargeable mechanical razors available on the market, which were heavy and difficult to handle, had sought also to simplify and to improve this everyday accessory.

In order to demonstrate the superiority of Bic razors, he had even forced his America's Cup teammates to shave one cheek with his invention and the other with the razor from a competing brand! The experience proved to be conclusive. In the span of 15 years, 45% of one-piece razors sold in the United States would be Bic.



*Marcel Bich found himself on the cover of the edition of March 21, 1977, of Le Nouvel Économiste, which headlined the "showdown" between the group he led and Gillette.*

# To each his own razor: expansion of the range

At the end of the 1970s, when disposables represented nearly 20% of the sector's market share, Bic wanted to refine its offerings. In 1978, Bic Corp. released its first razor for women: the Bic Classic Lady. The Bic Sensitive, a single-blade razor with an orange handle for sensitive skin, was launched the following year.

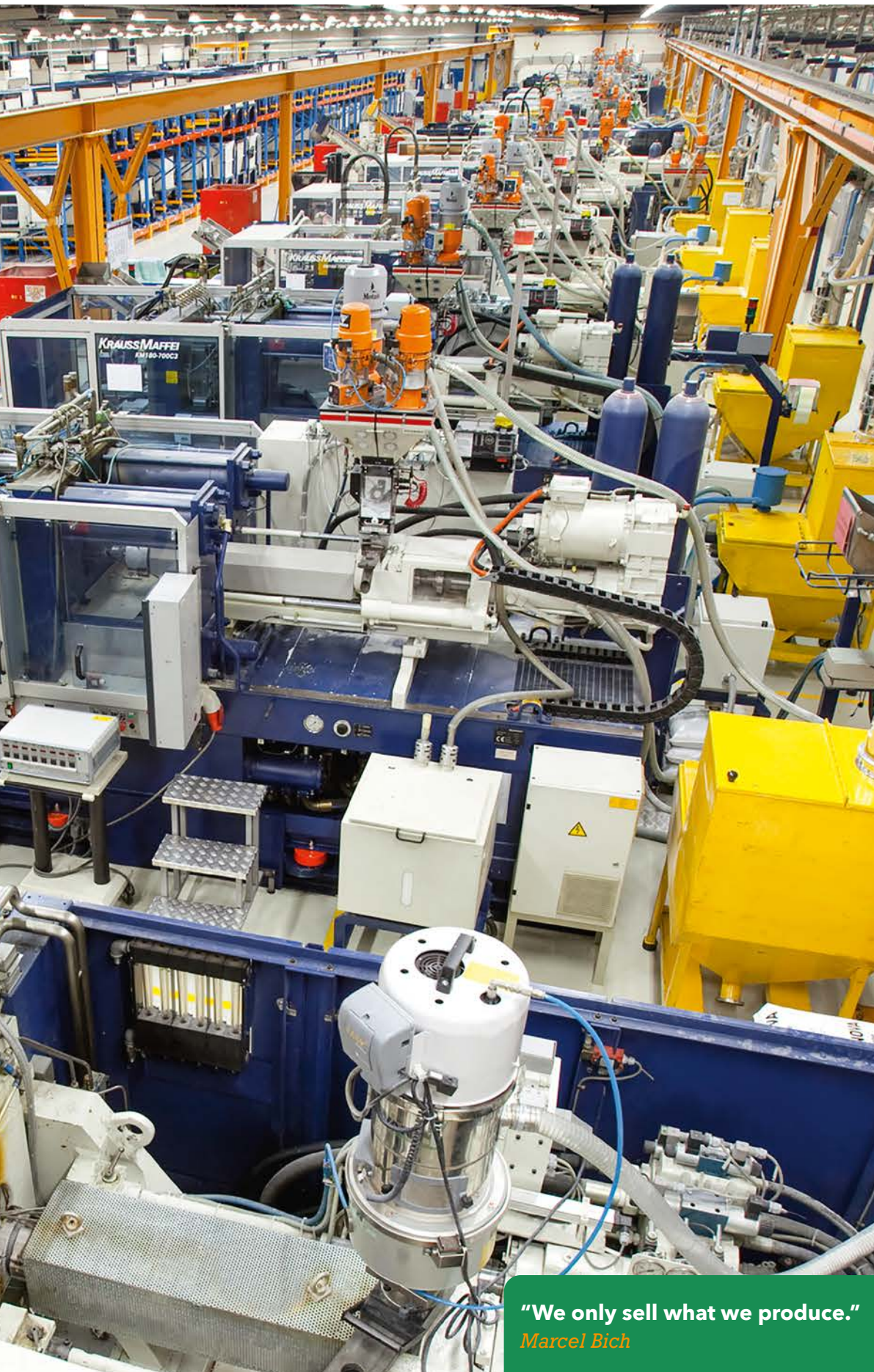
In 1988, the group put the Bic Barre Metal on the market. It featured a blade and a metal bar to prepare the skin and lift the hairs before shaving. The launch of this product attests to the race in which Bic competed against Gillette, which had a lead on the number of blades.

In 1992, Bic presented its two-blade razor: Twin Select. The number of blades would continue to increase over the years: in 2005, the Bic Flex 3 was released, and the Flex 4 in 2010. Meanwhile, in 1994, Bic released its first two-blade razor for women in France, named Bic Twin Lady. To win over the women's market, Bic had even landed a television spot with Éric Cantona, a football star and not yet an actor!

*Bic razors came from four factories around the world. These plants all apply the same manufacturing process with molds and machines designed in-house. The French, Greek, Mexican, and Brazilian sites were subject to identical standards and controls. This quality requirement guarantees the consistency of the products.*







## THE RAZOR Third Pillar of Success

*An injection molding  
workshop in the Greek Bic  
Violex razor factory in Athens.*

**"We only sell what we produce."**

*Marcel Bich*





Guy Laroche  
Paris



# The Realms of Adventure

Marcel Bich was a hard worker who also cultivated many interests. If he was passionate about something, he invested himself in it, body and soul. The causes he embraced, the diversifications he undertook, sometimes first on a personal basis, attest to his curiosity, his taste for challenges, entrepreneurship, and competition. Fashion, perfume, sports, and wine are all areas that the daring businessman explored and engaged in different periods of his life.



# Coupe de l'America and the Bordes golf course: other examples of Marcel Bich's entrepreneurial spirit

*Marcel Bich and Yoshiaki Sakurai at the Bordes golf course in the 1990s. The estate would be sold in 2008.*



In the 1960s, Marcel Bich, a great sailing enthusiast, began to take an interest in the prestigious Coupe de l'America and planned to take part. To prepare for this challenge, he created the Association Française pour la Coupe de l'America [French Association for the Coupe de l'America] (AFCA). However, his plans came to a halt against the regulations in place (deed of gift), which then allowed the New York Yacht Club, organizer of the Cup, to allow entry to only the first yacht club to have sent its application. In view of the repeated suggestions of Marcel Bich, the New York Yacht Club finally agreed to modify the rules and authorized the

organization of an eliminatory stage between the different "Challengers".

In 1970, Marcel Bich became the first French participant in this competition with France 1, a boat with a wooden hull class 12 m JI<sup>1</sup>, which he had built especially for the occasion. He then competed in 1974, and again in 1977. He competed for the last time in 1980 and, while he lost in the eliminatory stage, just before the final, his participation nevertheless marked the best French performance in this competition to this day. That year, when questioned after a victory in an eliminatory regatta against Australia aboard the France 3 (with an aluminum hull), Marcel Bich stated that only when sailing "*do we encounter the same problems as in a company*" and that he responded with his usual maxim: "*method, precision, discipline.*" Forced to give up sailing because of his age, Marcel Bich started playing golf, a sport he enjoyed for the personal challenge it involved: being alone on the course. He soon got it into his head to create his own golf course in Les Bordes, in Sologne and to do so, he joined forces with his Japanese friend Yoshiaki Sakurai. The project was entrusted to the American architect Robert von Hagge. Inaugurated in 1987, born of three cultures (France, Japan, United States) and ranked among the 50 most beautiful golf courses in the world, the Golf des Bordes, sold after the death of Marcel Bich, has become a mythical course.

<sup>1</sup> A 12 m JI means a boat 20 to 22 meters long, 4 wide, 3 draft, a mast of 25 meters, a weight of 25 tons, and a canopy up to 650 m<sup>2</sup>.

*France in 1970, the first French 12m JI.*

# The acquisition of Guy Laroche: getting a foothold in fashion

In 1970, Marcel Bich became the owner of the fashion house Guy Laroche, which had the captain of industry's wife among its clients. Even though this acquisition was made on a personal basis, it marked an important step in terms of diversification. In doing this, Marcel Bich saved the company from bankruptcy and allowed the creator to continue to do his job. In 1979, Bic acquired 72.5% of the shares of Guy Laroche, 70% of which were from Marcel Bich. While making investments, he entrusted the management to a man trained in finance and management, Pierre Lafont. To have full control of manufacturing, the latter took over the assets of the Gaston Jaunet brand, including a factory in Treize-Vents, near Cholet. It is this factory that, from then on, would make the pieces signed Guy Laroche, who was launching into ready-to-wear. This vertical integration, dear to the baron and quite innovative at the time in the fashion sector, made it possible to supply the markets in record time. A guarantee of competitiveness at a time when clothing brands sold on hangers were booming.

From then on, store openings multiplied in France and Europe, and then in the United States. Marie-Charlotte, one of Marcel Bich's daughters who joined the house in 1977, actively participated in its international development. While the haute-couture line continued to be provided by Guy Laroche until his death in 1989, other designers, including stylist Guy Douvier, took over to successfully design the two annual ready-to-wear collections.

They would then be imagined by renowned artistic directors, such as Angelo Tarlazzi or Alber Elbaz. Guy Laroche, of which Bic held 100% of the capital in 1997, was finally sold in 2001 to the company Rech International. At this stage, Bic wanted to focus on its three market segments: stationery, lighters, razors.

*Marie-Charlotte Bich and  
Guy Laroche in the 1980s.*



# Dim: the temptation to duplicate the Bic model in ready-to-wear

*The Dim stockings, bought by Marcel Bich on a personal basis in 1972, were then thoroughly revisited, as claimed in this 1973 advertisement: a new size guide, a sign distinguishing the right side from the wrong side so as to guarantee a better silhouette, packaging facilitating recognition of the item...*

Being a cheap, mass-market product, stockings were fully compatible with the Bic spirit. And all the more so when they are the product of a brand whose name is strangely reminiscent of Bic. Three simple letters: an i flanked by two consonants as if to go straight to the point. How can one not immediately see the symmetry between Bic and Dim?

We do not know if this intrigued Marcel Bich, but the fact remains that he personally took control of Dim in January 1972.

The company, which saw great success in 1958 with its Seamless Bas Dimanche [stockings], had been going through a difficult period since taking over the lingerie manufacturer Rosy. To repopularize the brand, Marcel Bich undertook a diversification project with the launch of men's and women's underwear. When financial balance was restored in 1976, Marcel Bich sold Dim to Bic. Two years later, Dim, which held 70% of the French stockings market, also became the number one in the sector in Italy. Claude Bich took part in this development by manufacturing looms for weaving stockings, as well as other sorting and packaging machines. In the early 1980s, the French brand was strong enough to take over the American Chesterfield.

But in 1987, Bic decided to separate from Dim anticipating certain changes, particularly in the behavior of consumers. The transfer to the American company Sara Lee would be done gradually, extending until 1989. It would bring Bic a total capital gain of 277 million francs.

**Quand les collants Dim changent, les cubes Dim changent aussi.**

1. Une bonne idée Dim ne va jamais seule. Les nouveaux Dim s'achètent dans des nouveaux cubes pleins d'astuces. Apprenez à les reconnaître.

2. Sans sortir le collant du cube, on peut choisir très facilement et sa couleur, et sa finesse. Pour cela, il faut faire sortir l'extrémité du sac par l'ouverture prévue à cet effet. En tendant sur la main ce petit échantillon de collant, on peut juger ainsi du résultat final obtenu sur la jambe.

3. Quand les collants Dim changent, les tailles changent aussi. Consultez soigneusement le nouveau Dim Guide.

4. Les nouveaux cubes s'achètent à volonté par deux ou à l'unité. Bien sûr, par deux, le prix est plus intéressant.

5. Quand les collants Dim changent, la manière de les enfiler change aussi. Ils ont un devant et un derrière. Alors prenez comme repère la couture du milieu du dos dans la ceinture.

6. A l'intérieur du cube, les nouveaux collants se cachent dans un petit sac qui est exactement de la même matière et de la même couleur que le collant à l'intérieur. Ce petit sac protège votre collant.

**dim**  
Dim a toujours un collant d'avance.

**"I make 10 decisions a day. A bad one, two mediocre ones, seven good ones. The latter largely redeem me for the others."**

**Marcel Bich**



# Château de Ferrand

*"I turned my water into wine."* This was how one good day in 1977, Marcel Bich announced to his family that he had sold the shares he held in the Perrier company to buy a wine estate in Saint-Emilion.

Seduced by the beauty of the site and the promise of the vine, he became the second industrialist to settle on the right bank of Bordeaux after Marcel Dassault in 1955.

A property in one piece, dominated by Merlot, located on the plateau of Saint-Hippolyte in the designation of Saint-Emilion, the Château de Ferrand has only had two owner families in 300 years of history.

Its founder, Elie de Bétoulaud, had built it in 1702 to the glory of Louis XIV. A gentleman, a lover of nature and the arts, he also had caves dug under the rock, which form a mysterious and unusual labyrinth.

Since 2005, Marie-Pauline Bich and her husband Philippe Chandon-Moët have presided over the destiny of Château de Ferrand. Surrounded by a high-performance team, they carried out major works in the vineyard, the cellars, the castle, and its outbuildings. The wine increased in quality and notoriety, and in 2012, Château de Ferrand became a Great Classified Growth of Saint-Emilion.

During the renovation works of the castle in 2019, the artist Alexandre Doucin drew, in the professional tasting room, a 360 degree fresco of the wine landscape of Château de Ferrand. All in black Bic Cristal pen.

*Planted on clay-limestone soil, the vineyard is one of the highest in the Saint-Emilion appellation.*





# Bic Sport: transposing a passion to a new activity

Marcel Bich's passion for sailing most certainly inspired the creation of what would become Bic Sport. It all started in 1974, when Marcel Bich took a stake in the yacht builder Dufour. Five years later, he bought Tabur Marine, which manufactured small molded plastic boats in Vannes. In 1980, Dufour released his first windsurfing board. Marcel Bich was convinced that this sport would become popular, and he invested in an industrial tool that would allow the production of tens of thousands of boards at an affordable price. Indeed, the Dufour Wing was a huge commercial success.

In 1982, Bic bought Osterman, the world's largest producer of windsurfing boards, whose models were known under the Windglider brand. In 1984, the year when windsurfing became an Olympic sport, Bic entrusted the management of its subsidiary dedicated to water sports – named Bic Marine and then Bic Sport – to Antoine Bich, who would establish Bic as a leader in the sector. During this decade, the group sold one in four boards worldwide. However, at the end of the 1980s, the market experienced a sharp decline. In 1993, Bic Sport began its first diversification by manufacturing surfboards, a sport that was beginning to become fashionable. In 1997, the subsidiary would bounce back to success thanks to this new product. Diversification continued with kayaks in the 2000s and stand up paddles in the 2010s. The sale of Bic Sport in 2019 is part of the strategy to refocus the group's activity on its core businesses.



*Bic Marine advertisement for windsurfing, 1980s.*

*Antoine Bich maneuvering a windsurf board with the Bic Sport logo, in January 1995.*



# A new challenge: making the best perfumes accessible to all

In 1988, Marcel Bich aspired to make a luxury product available to as many people as possible. The concept? Offer perfumes in simple containers, reminiscent of the shape of the lighter and distribute them in tobacco stores at the price of 25 francs. As always, quality was key to the development. Marcel Bich commissioned the Swiss firm Firmenich to compose the fragrances. It put several noses to work, including Alberto Morillas, who was given the instruction to imagine scents that were in the same families as the most popular perfumes at the time. Women's perfumes were presented in bottles colored red and blue, while men's perfumes in bottles colored green and black. Wishing to have complete control over its manufacture, Marcel Bich came to an agreement with Chauvet, a producer of natural extracts based in Grasse, and built an ultra-modern factory in Le Tréport. The bottle was subject of an innovation that has since remained historic in the sector: the miniaturization of the vaporizer. Advertiser Jacques Séguéla<sup>3</sup> praised the seductive power of "Parfum nu" on TV. Unfortunately, however, too far removed from the world of perfumery, the product was not met with the expected success. It was withdrawn from sale in the United States and France in 1990 and 1991 respectively, but it was still distributed in certain markets. The deficits of this diversification totaled 140 million francs accumulated over 1989 and 1990. The sale of this branch finalized in 1994, after the death of Marcel Bich, would generate a net capital gain of 339 million francs.

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Séguéla, born January 23, 1934, co-founded the Roux-Séguéla advertising agency in 1970. He went on to become vice-president of Euro-RSCG Worldwide, founder of Euro RSCG BETC and then Euro RSCG Works, which merged with Havas in 1996. Known for his communication skills, he has advised numerous politicians, including François Mitterrand for his presidential campaigns. He is also the author of numerous books, including *Havas Stories*, published in 2023. In 2006, Jacques Séguéla claimed to have been involved in 1,500 advertising campaigns and twenty presidential campaigns.

Published in May 1991 as an admission of error, "I didn't understand you!" the last advertisement for the Bic perfume shortly preceded the end of its marketing in France.



**BIC**  
LE PARFUM NU.

*"Je ne vous ai pas comprises!"*

*Je voulais être simple.*  
*Sans forfanterie. Sans tape-à-l'œil.*  
*Je voulais être honnête.*  
*Sans artifice. Sans masque. Je voulais être vrai.*  
*Un vrai parfum et rien d'autre.*  
*Mais ce n'est pas ce qu'attendait l'éternel féminin.*  
*Nous ne nous sommes pas compris.*  
*C'est pourquoi, aujourd'hui, j'ai décidé de me taire.*  
*Cette page est ma dernière publicité.*  
*Pourtant, je serai toujours prêt à vous appartenir.*  
*Je reste en vente.*  
*Pour vingt-cinq francs.*

TOUJOURS EN VENTE.

\*Prix maximum conseillé.



A Bic colored pick-up truck circulates in the market of Accra (capital of Ghana) in 2006.



Above, entrance to the Bic writing instruments production site located in Montevrain, near Marne-la-Vallée (France), and on the right, a view of the ink workshop.



A display of Bic writing instruments in a shopping center in São Paulo, Brazil, in 2011.

# The Second Generation Takes Over

At almost 80 years old, Marcel Bich entrusted the management of the group to his son Bruno. In reality, the tireless businessman did not wait until his old age to involve his children in the family business. Almost all of them have been involved from an early age, starting at the bottom of the ladder. This initiation facilitated the handover to the new generation who would continue and develop their father's work. Geographical expansion, the enrichment of product ranges, innovation, ever-increasing research into industrial efficiency... The group continues to grow.



# The arrival of Bruno Bich at the head of the company

In 1993, after having chaired the group for 40 years, Marcel Bich, then aged 79, decided to retire. He handed over the management of the group to his son Bruno, the second son of his first marriage, aged 47. In the early 1990s, eight of Marcel Bich's children worked in the family firm.

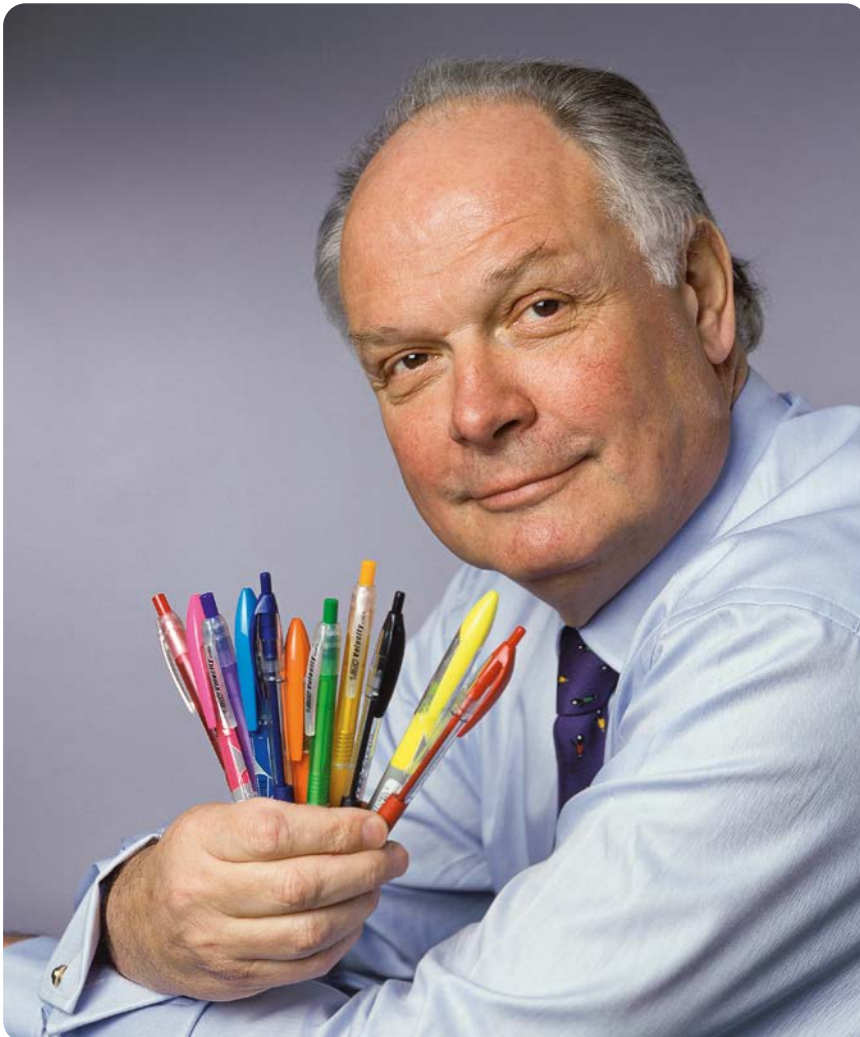
Therefore, appointing a successor was not an easy choice. Bruno Bich stood out due to the impressive results of the subsidiary he managed. Trained in the United States, he joined the marketing team of the American subsidiary in 1975, and was appointed

president of Bic Corp. in 1982; by then, he had largely proven himself.

Marcel Bich entrusted him the presidency of the company in 1993. The company was then healthy. That year, it had a turnover of more than six billion francs for a net profit of 396 million francs.

Marcel Bich spent the last months of his life working at the ANE (Natural Apprenticeship of the Company), a school dedicated to the practical training of entrepreneurs, whose name is an ironic anagram of the ENA [École Nationale d'Administration (National School of Administration)]. Unfortunately, the condition of his health did not allow him to see this project through. Marcel Bich died on May 30, 1994 and the Bich family retained control of the company. Two years after Marcel Bich, Édouard Buffard died at the age of 88. He was the first production manager in the Impasse des Cailloux factory in Clichy, and became general manager of the Bic company when it was created in 1953, a position he still held when he passed away. The same year, Claude Bich also died at the age of 57. Joining Bic when he was just 18 years old, Marcel Bich's eldest son had devoted his life to the company through the development of the technology and manufacturing processes of the ballpoint and the razor.

*After leading Bic Corp., the American subsidiary, from 1975 to 1993, Bruno Bich was entrusted to lead the global organization until 2018, when the fate of Bic was passed on to his son Gonzalve. Bruno Bich died on May 30, 2021.*



# The search for new range developments

While Marcel Bich explored new avenues outside the company's primary activities during the 1970s and 1980s, the 1990s and 2000s were marked by range expansions and several external growth operations in the stationery sector.

In 1992, a year before taking over the general management of the group, Bruno Bich acquired Wite-Out, a famous American brand of correction products (correction fluid in particular), which allowed him to consolidate the stationery range on the United States market. In 1997, Bic acquired the German Tipp-Ex, Europe's leading manufacturer of corrective products, and brought Sheaffer under its umbrella, a historic manufacturer of fountain pens. This operation, which allowed Bic to diversify into a segment that it had never previously explored, was not satisfactory, and the group sold Sheaffer to AT Cross, a major player in luxury writing instruments in 2014.

In 2004, Bic extended its offering aimed at schools with the acquisition of Stylen, another manufacturer of refillable fountain pens, which held nearly 10% of the market share in France.

The razor business was also developing strongly, despite the lack of company acquisitions. Instead, success came from the marketing departments that imagined new targeted and segmented products: in 1999, the Softwin, a razor with a pivoting head and lubricant strips, was released.

The Soleil range, intended for women, was launched in 2004. As for men, they were spoiled with a choice between the Hybrid, Comfort, and Flex models, put on the market in the 2010s and available in three

or five blades. Launched in the United States in 2015, the Flex 5, which featured a five moving blades and a metal ball on the handle for increased precision, shows the great detail that went into the creation of this product to ensure the user's comfort.



**"My father was an industrialist, above all. I am more of a marketing man. Our ranges have gone from what the consumer needed, with impeccable quality and at a fair price, to what they want, always with impeccable quality and at a fair price."**

*Bruno Bich, Les Echos, 2016*

# Seeking geographic expansion in Eastern Europe, Central Europe, and Asia

Advertising campaign in Poland.



The arrival of Bruno Bich at the head of the group coincides with the opening of Eastern European countries and the transition towards the market economy of the former Soviet republics, the most important of which is Russia. A sales office was opened there in February 1996, following the opening in October 1994 of a subsidiary in Poland. Bruno Bich was also determined to tap into the Asian market. Being the birthplace of calligraphy, it was not an easy place for proponents of the ballpoint to conquer. In 2004, Bic bought the company Kosaído Shoji from Yoshiaki Sakurai, its distributor in Japan for more than 30 years. Although the archipelago offered few prospects for growth, it was an ideal place for testing concepts and prototypes. The following year, Geoffroy Bich left for China, where the group subcontracted products for the American market. Claude Bich's son opened the first factory of a hundred people in the vicinity of Shanghai.

It must allow to reintegrate the products entrusted to Chinese manufacturers to keep the added value and circumvent the risk of a leak of know-how.

Geoffroy Bich was supported in sales by his young cousin Gonzalve. But the task was not easy: the market for writing instruments was dominated by Japan. Moreover, the Chinese factory was unable to reach the necessary size to amortize the costs of the plant – this would lead to its closure in 2017. The lighter presented many more opportunities for growth and Geoffroy Bich then initiated the opening of a factory dedicated to this product on Chinese soil with his uncle François. It would be commissioned in 2013.

Meanwhile, Bic tackled the Indian market in 2009 when they acquired 40% of the shares of the number one stationery brand on the sub-continent: Cello Pens. This acquisition would be finalized in 2015.

This advertisement from the 2000s for Bic razors, destined for Malaysia, depicts a diodon, a local fish also known as the porcupine fish.



# Investments in new technologies

To build on the strength and mastery of its lighter valve technology, Bic launched an ambitious R&D program in 2003. Thanks to the program, which aimed to produce hydrogen cartridges, that would power portable chargers with a fuel cell, the batteries of electronic devices could be recharged without having to plug them into an electrical outlet. In 2004, Bic's R&D teams joined forces with the Innovation Laboratory for New Energy Technologies and nanomaterials, attached to the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). Then, in 2011, the group acquired Angstrom Power Incorporated, a Canadian company that manufactures portable fuel cell chargers. Bic's hydrogen cartridge technology and Angstrom's charger technology were designed to work together. But, due to a lack of consumer appeal, fuel cell technology would be resold in 2015.

At the same time, Bic was carrying out another diversification in mobile telephones. In 2008, in partnership with the operator Orange, the group launched the Bic Phone in France, an item that the group wanted to be simple and accessible. The phone would be available in the usual points of sale of Bic products: tobacco stores and press houses, train stations, and airports.

Available in two colors, orange and green, the rechargeable Bic phone came ready to use with an integrated SIM card, a fully charged battery, and one hour of communication time. Four months after its launch, 100,000 units had been sold. This first model was subsequently marketed in Spain (2009) and Belgium (2010). However, in 2015, overtaken by smartphones, the Bic phone was no longer marketed.

*In 2008, Bic launched the "ready-to-use" mobile in partnership with Orange.*

*The Bic fuel cell and its charger.*





# A major challenge: carrying out industrial rationalization

Bruno Bich's presidency was also characterized by a reorganization and modernization of industrial sites throughout the world. In 2002, the group had 22 plants compared to the 47 that existed a few years earlier. This restructuring was carried out with the help of Mario Guevara. He started as financial controller of Bic Mexico in 1992, and was successively appointed director of the Mexican subsidiary. He was then responsible for the South American continent in 1998, served as president of Bic Corporation for the two American subcontinents in 2001, and then general manager for group operations in 2004.

*The new Bic industrial site inaugurated in Samer, in Pas-de-Calais, in 2017, brought together the activities of the former factory present in this locality with that of Boulogne-sur-Mer.*



In 2006, he decided to separate the function of Chairman of the Board of Directors, retained by Bruno Bich, from that of Chief Executive Officer, entrusted to Mario Guevara. In France, from the beginning of the 2010s, Bic consolidated the Montévrain production lines scattered around the Paris region, including those of the historic Clichy factory, which was closing its doors for good. Eight million ballpoints, four million cartridges, and two million complete pens leave this new site daily. At the same time, the head office moved from rue Petit to Clichy, at rue Jeanne d'Asnières. This industrial rationalization continued until 2017, the year during which the group brought together its factories in Boulogne-sur-Mer and Samer (Pas-de-Calais) at a new site, in Samer. This new site would host the production of felt pens, markers, erasable slates, mechanical pencils, graphite pencils, and colored pencils, along with logistics, maintenance, a research and development center, and support functions.

Bic has always integrated its product manufacturing with its production machinery. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Xavier Bich, the youngest of the siblings, worked at Bic Technologies to further improve this search for efficiency. This department aims to improve the design and manufacture of machines and molds, particularly through the integration of 3D modeling. Mastery of industrialization was a key differentiation strategy.

**"To understand the advisors you choose, you have to have a broad education. In general, we must maintain communication between generations and civilizations. This question is crucial."**

*Bruno Bich, February 3, 2021*

# Embracing a new cause: sustainable development

Originally, Marcel Bich designed the Bic Cristal as a refillable pen. As everyone knows, the consumer did not prefer this option. *"Their choice was 90% disposable. Our production, therefore, followed,"* specified Marcel Bich in the company's 1975 annual report. However, although Bic products are not always reloadable, their useful life (more than 2 kilometers of writing for a Bic Cristal, up to 3,000 flames for a Bic Maxi lighter, and 17 days of shaving with a razor Bic Flex 3), the restricted quantity of materials used in their composition and their quality, make them much more durable than most competitors. Optimizing the use of materials while maintaining the strength and reliability of the products and offering the longest possible use: this is the guideline of the company.

However, wanting to go further, Bic launched its first sustainable development program in 2003 under the charge of Marie-Aimée Bich-Dufour. It is ambitious, aiming to improve the environmental performance of its sites and reduce the environmental footprint of its products. The group immediately published a first report addressed to both experts and the general public. In 2008, it went further by introducing a sustainable development barometer, a management tool that concretely translates the group's commitment in this area through ten key indicators (or objectives). Following the Evolution pencil made in 1993 with synthetic resin from recycled material, the Bic group challenged itself to offer products with a reduced environmental impact and give them a second life. In 2009, the Bic Ecolutions razor was launched, with a handle made of bioplastic and packaging made of 100% recycled cardboard. In 2010, the group initiated the "Bic recycle" operation, which allowed consumers to return their used Bic shavers in envelopes so that they could be recycled. This attempt did not meet with the expected success

and was ultimately suspended. However, Bic did not abandon the initiative.

The following year, in association with Terracycle, it distributed collection boxes for non-recyclable waste at sites including schools, stores, universities, and more. The plastic from these used writing instruments, which expanded beyond Bic to include any brand of stationery, would then be turned into everyday products, like pencil holders and, from 2017, outdoor benches. In 2018, Bic launched "Writing the Future, together", its new program for 2025. The group wished to capitalize on its early commitment and strengthen its involvement in sustainable development through five ambitious commitments: Promote sustainable innovation in Bic products. Take action against climate change. Commit to workplace safety. Proactively involve suppliers. Invest in a better life through education.

Collection and recycling operation for "Bic recycle" razors and the Bic Ecolutions razor in its 100% recycled cardboard packaging.



You have to write a lot before you get to the end of a Bic pen! When they reach the end of their life, the pens can be recycled at collection areas found in schools, stores, universities and more.



# Creativity at the tip of the pen: the Bic collection

In 1998, an exhibition was organized in Val d'Aoste in homage to Baron Bich, who was born in this region. On this occasion, artists were invited to present works made from Bic writing instruments or inspired by the brand's universe. The event marked the creation of the Bic collection of contemporary art. This was unveiled to the public for the first time in 2018 at the Centquatre-Paris.

The exhibition presented 150 works by more than 80 international artists who have

turned iconic Bic products (pen, razor, lighter) into a creative medium.

Throughout the world, Bic created initiatives to promote artistic learning. From 2016 to 2019, the Bic prize for the École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts de Paris-Cergy invited students to set their inspiration free with the only requirement being the use of a Bic brand tool. The BIC Art Master competition, launched in 2017 and rewarding the best work produced with a Bic ballpoint pen by an African artist, shows the group's involvement in promoting creativity and human expression on the continent.

Alongside the commitments that Bic makes in favor of art and young artists, its iconic products are recognized as cult favorites and are included in the permanent collections of the most prestigious museums. The Bic Cristal joined the Architecture and Design department of the Museum of Modern Art, MoMA, in New York in 2001, and the Bic Maxi J1 lighter joined in February 2005. These two products, alongside the original Bic single-blade razor, also entered the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art / Center Georges Pompidou in Paris in 2006. In 2021, the Bic 4 Colors was also included.



Opposite, a drawing taken from the book *Le fils du roi* [The king's son] (2012) entirely produced in a Bic M10 ballpoint pen by the Belgian artist Éric Lambé.

The Bic collection was exhibited at Centquatre-Paris in 2018. It presented 150 works by more than 80 international artists.





# Promoting education: the essential project of the Bic Corporate Foundation

Bic and schoolchildren have a long common history. During the 1950s and 1960s, the company had fought in France to have its ballpoint pen authorized in the classroom. The students then took it up, never to part with it again. Many children suddenly gained self-confidence by making clean copies!

Over the years, Bic would expand and structure its fight against school failure and commit to greater access to primary education around the world.

In 2016, wishing to strengthen and structure its philanthropic projects, Bic created the Fondation d'Entreprise Bic [Bic Corporate Foundation].

Chaired until 2020 by Marie-Aimée Bich-Dufour, it is mainly dedicated to the fight against school dropouts, the access to equal education for girls and women, and training in environmental issues. The BIC Corporate Foundation works with the group's subsidiaries and factories, but also with NGOs and local communities to support projects that contribute to improving learning conditions around the world. Through social entrepreneurship initiatives, it also works to promote innovation in education.

More recently, the Foundation has evolved in its strategy to focus on developing creative skills in children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, working on essential skills to prepare the next generation.



*The Bic Rêv'Elles Foundation  
invests in the education  
and schooling of women and  
girls from underserved  
communities.*

*Being Executive Vice-President of Société Bic  
and Secretary to the Board of Directors from 1995  
to 2019, General Counsel of the Bic Group from  
1995 to 2016, Marie-Aimée Bich-Dufour  
contributed to the launch of the Sustainable  
Development Program, for which she assumed  
responsibility from 2004 to 2018. She is behind the  
creation of the Bic Corporate Foundation.*





Gonzalve Bich (center) inaugurates BIC's new facilities in Kenya following the late 2018 acquisition of Haco Industries Ltd.

# The Ambitions of the Third Generation

At the dawn of the 2020s, the third generation took over with Gonzalve Bich, and the group took new strategic directions. While it refocused on its three historical activities and its flagship products, the group is also making a parallel commitment to adjacent and fast-growing markets. It is also making a digital shift, both in its offerings and its distribution networks, and it seeks to accelerate its approach to sustainable development.

# The arrival of Gonzalve Bich at the head of the company

Gonzalve Bich, being very close to his grandfather despite having spent his childhood in the United States where his father ran Bic Corp., joined the group in 2003 after studying history at Harvard. Initially in charge of business development in Asia, he held various positions before becoming Deputy CEO in June 2016, when a transition period began following the departure of Mario Guevara. Bruno Bich then returned to the head of the group, for a period of two years, and held the position of Chairman and CEO in order to support the succession. From January 2017, Gonzalve also took over the management of operations. He was named general manager a year later.

Gonzalve Bich, Deputy Chief Executive Officer (June 2016).

In the mid-2010s, after years of expansion and development, some markets in which Bic operates were maturing and growth was slowing. Being now in control, Gonzalve undertook structural projects to put the group back on the path to profitable, long-term growth. Three main questions were raised. Is the organization of the group always best able to respond to the challenges it faces? Is the geographical location still adapted to the reality of the third millennium? Do the activities benefit from sufficient means to reinvent themselves? In 2019, Gonzalve Bich launched the Bic 2022 transformation plan *Invent the Future*, which aims to profoundly transform and adapt the organization to the needs of markets in which the company operates, but also to instill a new culture to ensure its sustainability.

In 2020, the Horizon strategy was implemented in continuity with *Invent the Future*. This plan would develop Bic's operating model while consolidating its leadership in its three business categories – stationery, lighters, and razors – and entering adjacent market segments. Bruno Bich died on May 30, 2021 – the anniversary of Marcel's death – having completed his duty of transmission.





# A new strategy to anchor the group's future

The Bic 2022 transformation plan *Invent the Future* and the Horizon strategic plan outline Bic's ambition for the years to come: to be a more agile, more innovative, and more consumer-centric group.

This involves refocusing on its historical activities, taking advantage of growth opportunities in adjacent markets through acquisitions, and an upmarket move in each of the product categories.

Following this logic, Bic sold its subsidiary Bic Sport and its factory located in Vannes in 2019 to the Estonian group Tahe Outdoors, one of the main European manufacturers of kayaks, canoes, and kite-surfs. In December 2020, the group also decided to separate from Pimaco, its adhesive label activity in Brazil.

Additionally, the group was expanding the target scope of its three activities by focusing on market segments that, until this point, had been explored very little or not at all.

In the razor segment, Bic was launching Made for You, a brand that offers gender-neutral refillable razors, and, in writing instruments, it was positioning itself in the temporary tattoo market with BodyMark by Bic pens, designed to draw on the skin. Finally, in the lighters category, in 2020 Bic was carrying out its first external growth operation since its creation, with the acquisition of Djee, one of the main manufacturers of quality lighters based in Brittany, specializing in personalized lighters and limited series. This acquisition offered Bic opportunities for significant growth in Europe and North America.

In 2022, the group acquired Inkbox, a leading Canadian company in the semi-permanent tattoo market, Tattly, a leading decal brand based in the US and AMI (Advanced Magnetic Interaction), a French start-up pioneer in augmented interaction technology.

*In 2020, Bic announced a partnership with the technology company Iprova to launch the Bic Invention Lab. It aimed to strengthen the group's capacity for innovation and to support its Research and Development activities by drawing on Iprova's approach to machine learning and the use of data.*



Iprova  
INVENT FIRST

**BIC launches invention lab with technology company Iprova**



# Consolidating Bic's presence in emerging markets

Although Bic's internationalization began very early, its geographical influence had not been evenly distributed, with different objectives existing in various regions. In 2018, when Gonzalve Bich took over as CEO of the group, market penetration was still unevenly distributed across the globe. The group maintained a strong presence in Europe and the two Americas in all of its product categories. In Africa and the Middle East, the group benefited from solid positions in the writing instruments market. On the other hand, the Asian markets (more than four billion inhabitants) were still difficult to conquer, due in particular to the excellent establishment of certain competitors and, no doubt, to a relationship with the written word that is significantly different from that which exists in the West. This is why the internationalization strategy led by Gonzalve Bich initially focused on strengthening Bic's positions on the African continent, which had very high potential.

In 2018, it was announced that the production sites and distribution activity of Haco Industries Kenya Ltd would be transferring to Bic. The company, which had worked with the group since the 1970s, produced stationery under license and distributed all of the group's products in East Africa.

In 2019, Bic acquired Lucky Stationery Nigeria Ltd, Nigeria's leading manufacturer of writing instruments, which generates five million euros in sales and controls nearly 30% market share by volume.

At the same time as this acquisition, Bic chose to set up its regional management for West Africa in Ivory Coast. When the alliance with CFAO, the historical distributor in the area, comes to an end in March 2023, the current office in Abidjan was equipped with additional commercial functions. This step will validate the transition from a distribution model to a direct and hybrid sales model.

*In 2019, Haco Industries transferred its writing instrument production and distribution activities to Bic, of which it has been a partner for 40 years. Below, the plant in Nairobi, Kenya.*



# The challenge of the 21st century: taking the digital turn

Bic's strong position in the United States has enabled the group to further connect with its consumers through online distribution, online offerings, and communication. The end of the 2010s was marked by the intensification of initiatives in this direction. Thus, in 2017, in order to meet consumer expectations, Bic launched the Bic Shave Club in France and England, an online subscription that offers kits containing a razor and refills, sent monthly or bimonthly. After this first initiative of direct sales to consumers, Bic continues to support its customers in their appropriation of the digital tool on a daily basis. In order to encourage this use and create new purchasing opportunities, the group launched [www.bic.com](http://www.bic.com) in 2019, an online sales site specially designed for the general public. Furthermore, the group is also continuing its digitization effort at the industrial level by equipping itself with digitally controlled machines, which push operations automation and control even further.

While the digital shift is well underway in terms of distribution, it is also integrated at the level of the products themselves. In November 2020, Bic acquired Rocketbook, the first American brand of reusable smart notebooks, which allowed it to position itself in the booming digital writing niche. Its flagship products are the Rocketbook Core and Rocketbook Fusion notebooks, both of which use an erasable pen and are connected to the *cloud* via an application allowing the user to download their content directly to their electronic device.

With the creation of the online sales site [www.bic.com](http://www.bic.com), Bic promotes the consumer experience.

Rocketbook smart notebooks were acquired by Bic in 2020.



# Contribute to the ecological transition

In 2018, with its sustainable development program objectives brought together under the name *Writing the Future, Together*, Bic stayed true to its historic commitments and reaffirmed its desire to take part in progress relating to social, societal, and environmental responsibility, and even accelerate this process. As a predominant player in plastics, Bic continues to focus its efforts in research and development to identify solutions that are more respectful of the environment.

Thus, the group encourages the development of "green chemistry", which consists, for example, of manufacturing inks made with pigments from fair trade and organic crops. Bic is also working on the design of recycled and recyclable packaging.

At the beginning of 2021, the group launched the Bic Cristal Re'New, the first rechargeable metallic Cristal ballpoint pen, and Bic Bamboo, the first rechargeable

razor with a responsibly sourced bamboo handle.

In Europe, Bic is starting to deploy its new range of hybrid razors, whose handle is made from recycled plastic. A lighter made from fully recycled components is under study.

At the same time, Bic has continued its used writing product collection programs with TerraCycle, and even encourages certain distributors to become collection centers. In 2022, Bic started testing used lighter collection channels that can be sent to a recycling line, which is now operational after seven years of Research & Development.

Deeply rooted in its time and markets, the group is emerging from the unprecedented period of global pandemic that marked the years 2020 and 2021 by reaffirming its wish to be a bold actor of change, ready to invent a future in connection with the others and in responsibility.

*In 2021, Bic launched the Cristal Re'New, a refillable ballpoint pen composed of an aluminum body and a recycled plastic cap.*



*First rechargeable Bic razor labelled CO<sub>2</sub> neutral, featuring a responsibly sourced bamboo handle, Bic Bamboo is launched 2021. It is sold in plastic-free packaging.*

**"We are accelerating our efforts by subscribing even more ambitious sustainable development goals."**

**Gonzalve Bich**

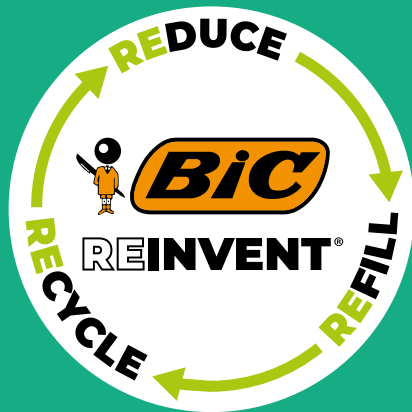




# IS COMMITTED!

THE AMBITIONS  
OF THE THIRD  
GENERATION

*Together with the creation of  
refillable products,  
Bic arranged for the collection  
of used pens so that they  
can be recycled and transformed  
into street furniture.*



## BRING BACK YOUR USED PENS WE RECYCLE THEM

**1** You bring your used pens back to your store.

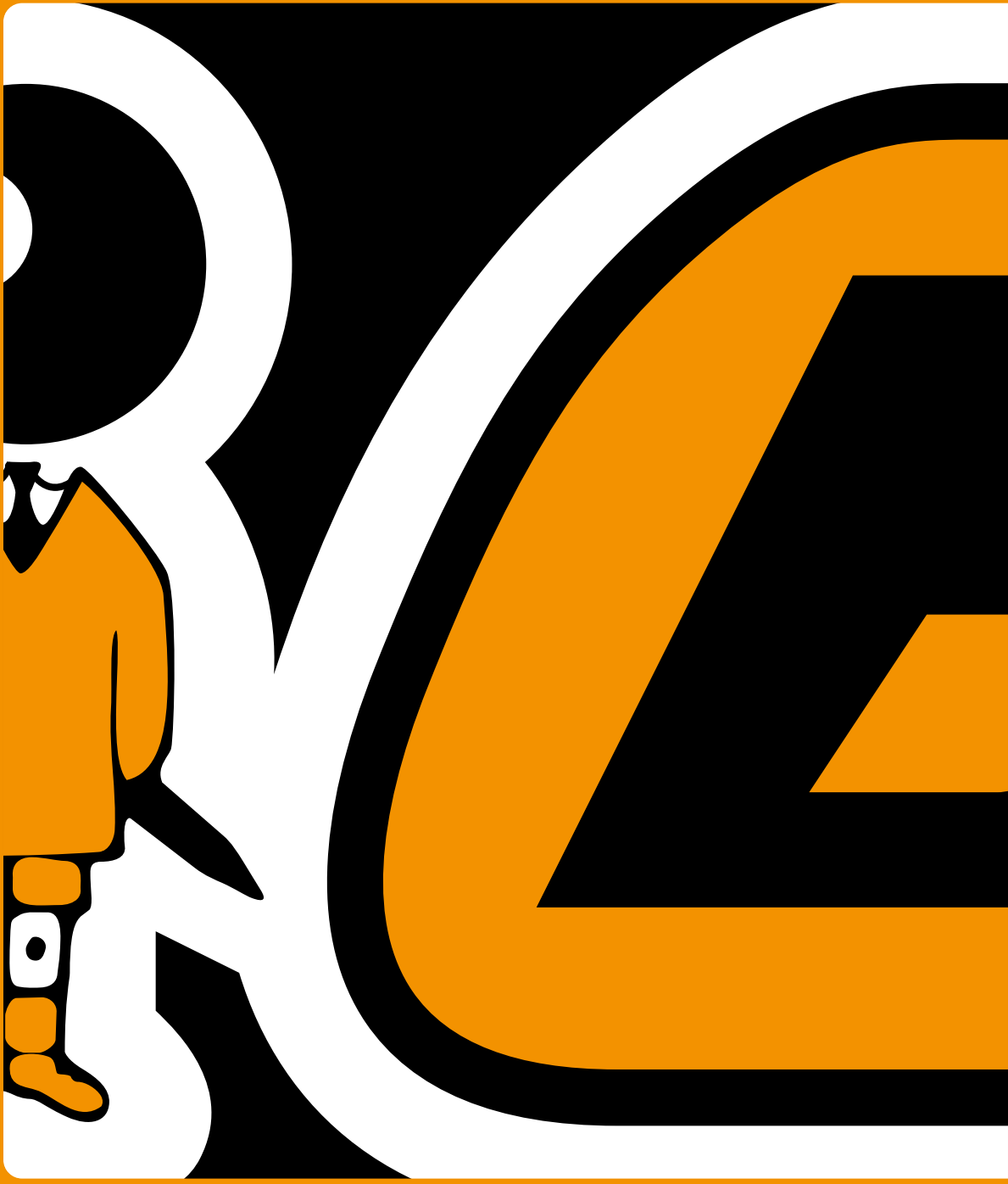
**2** We recycle them.



**3** Your pens become benches.







# The Journey of An Iconic Brand through Advertising

Along with the incomparable efficiency of a design exclusively at the service of a function and a very high demand for quality, advertising is one of the three pillars that has led to the tremendous success of Bic products. Since the beginning, being entrusted to talent agencies, Bic's advertisements have played on humor by sketching everyday life scenes, not without a lack of audacity. Likewise, the advertisements typically feature themes from pop culture, particularly sports, sometimes featuring celebrities to represent a product. Extraordinarily rich, BIC advertising on its own tells the story of advertising from 1950 to the present day. Given the impossibility to unfold it completely, this chapter goes back to some Bic's most iconic campaigns.

# THE HISTORY OF ADVERTISING

1950

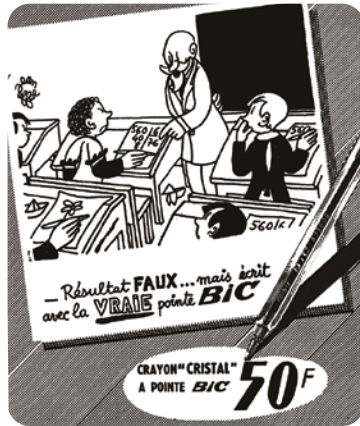
"It's already written, ma'am!" Designed by Pierre Couronne, the first Bic advertisement is published in the regional French newspaper "La Voix du Nord"

First mention of the slogan "It runs, it runs, the ball pen"



1952

"The real BIC tip" Illustrator Jean Effel signed his first advertisements for Bic



1953

The Oscar for best advertising was awarded to Bic for the Bic campaign "It runs, it runs, the Bic point"

1961

First Bic advertisements in the United States: a professional skater, a shooting champion, and the slogan "Writes the first time, writes every time" make an impression

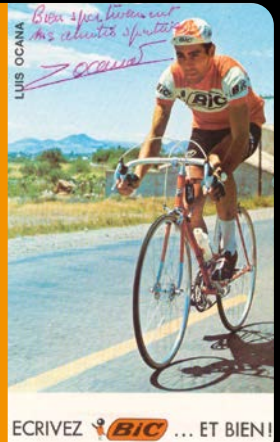


1962

Direct advertising in Africa thanks to an advertising truck and a twin-engine plane in the brand's colors

1967

Bic sponsored a team of professional European cyclists who participated in major races, such as the Tour de France. Luis Ocaña was the winner of the 1973 edition



1973

In the United States, here at Time Square New York, thanks to the slogan "Flick your Bic", the brand won the support of lighter users with humor



1976

"If it's Bic, it's good", proclaimed an advertisement for Bic lighters intended for the Belgian market



# 1952

Poster artist Raymond Savignac designed his first Bic campaign

It is featured on a Bic vehicle in the Tour de France publicity caravan



# 1960s

In the early 1960s, Bic circumvented the ballpoint pen ban in French schools and arrives in classrooms through its advertising blotters



# 1961

Savignac created the Bic Boy on the occasion of the launch of the new tungsten carbide ballpoint

He would then be definitively placed in front of the 3 letters BIC to form the brand's new logo

NOUVELLE BILLE



# 1970

Launch of the Bic 4 Colors pen In Italy, it was a representative of the carabinieri police force who praised its merits!



# 1970

The song from the "Bic Naranja y Bic Cristal" [Bic Orange and Bic Cristal] commercial launched in Spain quickly became a classic

# 1973

The slogan, "Your hand will make the difference" marked the advertising of the first Bic lighter



# 1977

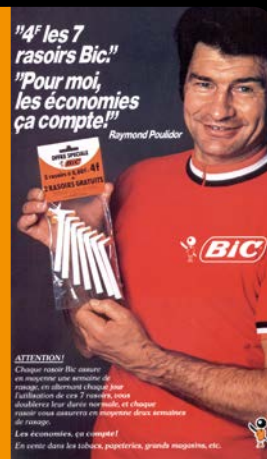
Raymond Savignac created his last campaign for Bic razors

TV advertising now surpassed poster displays



# 1978

"4 francs for 7 Bic razors. For me, savings count," assures cyclist Raymond Poulidor in a funny spot





**1982**

A cactus desperate to have soft skin sings "one day my Bic will come"

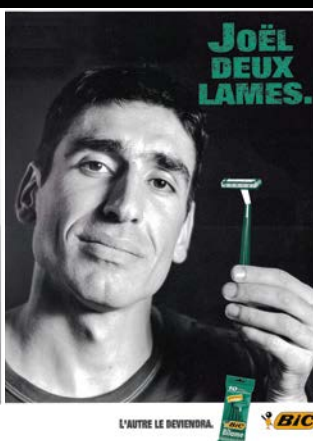
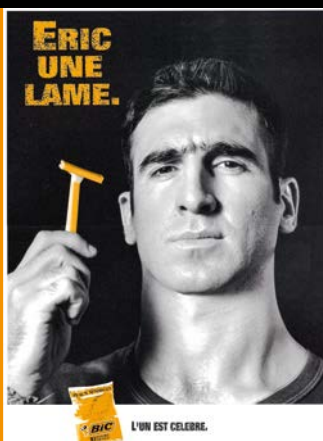


**1982**

"Only Bic makes a shaver for all kinds of skin." Tennis champion John McEnroe became the image of the Bic razor in the United States

**1995**

Soccer player Éric Cantona and his brother Joël call out to each other in an advertisement for Bic razors. Then, in a spot by Valérie Lemerrier, Éric praised the merits of the razor for women



**1998**

In partnership with Citroën, Bic launched the Bic Saxo. "A Bic will never hurt a Bic Saxo" said the voice-over of the commercial that featured a police officer whose Bic pen is reluctant to fill out a ticket



**2003**

In Brazil, sports columnist Milton Neves praises the performance of the Bic Twin razor



**2006**

First viral campaign with the videos of the "Perles du Bac"



**1991**

Marcel Bich spoke in an advertisement that looks like a press release on the discontinuation of the Bic perfume

**1991**

"The Typewriter", advertisement for Cristal and M10 for the Belgian market

**1994**

The characters Mordillozaure and Brizeminozaure made out of modeling clay by Richard Golezowski (Aardman Animations) praised the solidity of the new Evolution pencil in an animated film



**1997**

Bic went into Formula 1 and sponsored the team of champion Alain Prost



**1997**

Bic launched a campaign in Greece with Italian photographer Oliviero Toscani



**2003**

"Suave con tu cara" [Soft with your face], the Mexican ad for the Comfort Twin features a woman whose silicone breasts explode on contact with her lover's beard



**2010**

The bear of the viral advertising campaign for Tipp-Ex was a hit in Europe

In Oceania, the "Express yourself" campaign invites the consumer to use the ballpoint pen beyond writing



**2011**

Bic repainted schools in Africa in the colors of the brand





**2011**

For the European launch of the new Bic Flex 3 men's shaver, Bic took up curling in a commercial that became a classic



**2017**

Funny commercial, "Mr. Lamba Naam Butterflow Ballpen" for Cello Pens in India: A father can't stop writing and gives his child a four-page name



**2019**

Miryam Lumpini, tattoo artist and influencer based in California, became the face of the temporary tattoo markers Bodymark by Bic



**2019**

BIC launched a television and digital campaign to alert consumers to the risk of accidents related to the use of non-compliant lighters



NOTRE QUALITÉ,  
VOTRE SÉCURITÉ

**2020**

"When I grow up, I want to be a bench" said this Bic Cristal, loud and clear, at the start of the 2021 school year, thus encouraging its users to participate in the Bic TerraCycle recycling program



**2012**

In Mexico, then in other Latin American countries, the Bic Evolution pencil resisted the teeth of the family dog

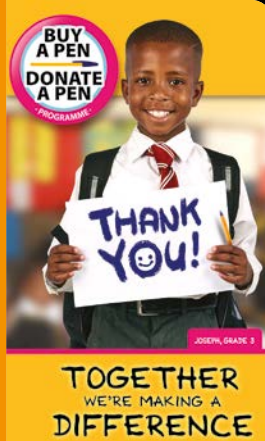


**2016**

Bic advertisement in Africa for the original fine Bic Cristal

**2017**

Launch in South Africa of the "Buy a pen, donate a pen" campaign. It extended a product donation program for underprivileged children, initiated in this country in 2011.



**2018**

Campaign for the Bic Flex shaver in Europe



**2020**

Katie Ledecky and Simone Manuel, the two American Olympic medalist swimmers, promoted the new Bic Soleil Sensitive Advanced razor.



**2021**

The American campaign to launch EZ Reach lighter featured celebrities Martha Stewart and Snoop Dogg and is a hit around the world.





*elle court elle court*



LA POINTE  
**BiC**

savignac

Af

AGENCE FRANÇAISE DE PROPAGANDE

## “It runs, it runs, the Bic Point”, Savignac, 1952

In 1952, Marcel Bich hired poster artist Raymond Savignac (1907-2002), made famous in 1948 by his depiction of the dairy cow Monsavon. A few months after the launch of the Bic Cristal pen, a large-scale national advertising campaign was orchestrated, proclaiming a simple but heady slogan. Imagined in 1950 – “It runs, it runs, the Bic Point” is broadcast, in its spoken version, to the familiar tune of the song, “Il court, il court le ferret” [It runs, it runs, the ferret]. Billboards, press, radio, television, all the media were mobilized to highlight the unprecedented speed of writing allowed by the Bic tip, symbolized by moving characters, such as this runner dashing at full speed behind the object he tries to catch up to: a gigantic blue pen identifiable both by its logo and by its silhouette. Savignac’s tongue-in-cheek drawings, immediately recognizable, undoubtedly contributed to the campaign being rewarded with an advertising Oscar.

They bore witness to a talent that wields unparalleled bright colors, effective graphics, and a touch of humor, marking an entire generation and promoting the formidable advent of an everyday consumer product. Seventy years after its invention, present in the collections of the greatest museums in the world, it is recognized worldwide as an iconic object.



# The Tour de France caravan, 1953

The first Bic advertising vehicle, which traveled the French roads in 1952 alongside the cyclists of the Tour de France, marked the beginning of a historic and lasting collaboration with the famous sports competition. The following year, artist Félix Aublet created the extraordinarily futuristic design of the truck topped by a huge tip of the Bic Cristal pen adopting the contours of a rocket. From its first appearance, the public got carried away and chanted the brand's now famous slogan "It runs, it runs, the Bic Point."

Faced with this enthusiasm, the partnership was reiterated in 1953, 1955, then in 1967 and 1996, and from 2011 to 2019. From 1967 to 1974, Bic sponsored a professional team of riders from European countries where cycling was king. The Bic team won the mythical yellow jersey thanks to the participation of Luis Ocaña, winner of the race in 1973.

This partnership initiated innovative communication centered on sporting events, in addition to the usual media. In 1997, for example, the company invested in sponsoring the Formula 1 team Prost Grand Prix. The strategy was soon extended to other markets in order, by marking its presence in the places of pop culture, to promote the notoriety of the brand so that it was as wide as possible and to anchor it in the culture of the country.



# BIC BUTANE LIGHTER

CLIENT: Bic Pen Corp.

TITLE: "True Stories"

CODE NO.: WBBL6357

LENGTH: :30



RE-ENACTMENT OF A TRUE STORY

(SFX: MUSIC UNDER THROUGHOUT)  
PAINTER: I dropped this Bic lighter in a can of paint this morning.



RE-ENACTMENT OF A TRUE STORY

Now it's working fine.



WIFE: Oscar has always had the problem of keeping his grip when he flicks his Bic.



MAN: That truck ran over my Bic Lighter.



RE-ENACTMENT OF A TRUE STORY

But even under tremendous pressure, I can still flick my Bic.



(VO): Flicking your Bic has become America's favorite pastime.



So we hear lots of stories about people whose Bic's flick through thin and thick.



RE-ENACTMENT OF A TRUE STORY

FARMER: Last year I lost this, planting potatoes. Now I just found it.



Can you imagine what it's like not to flick your Bic for a whole year?

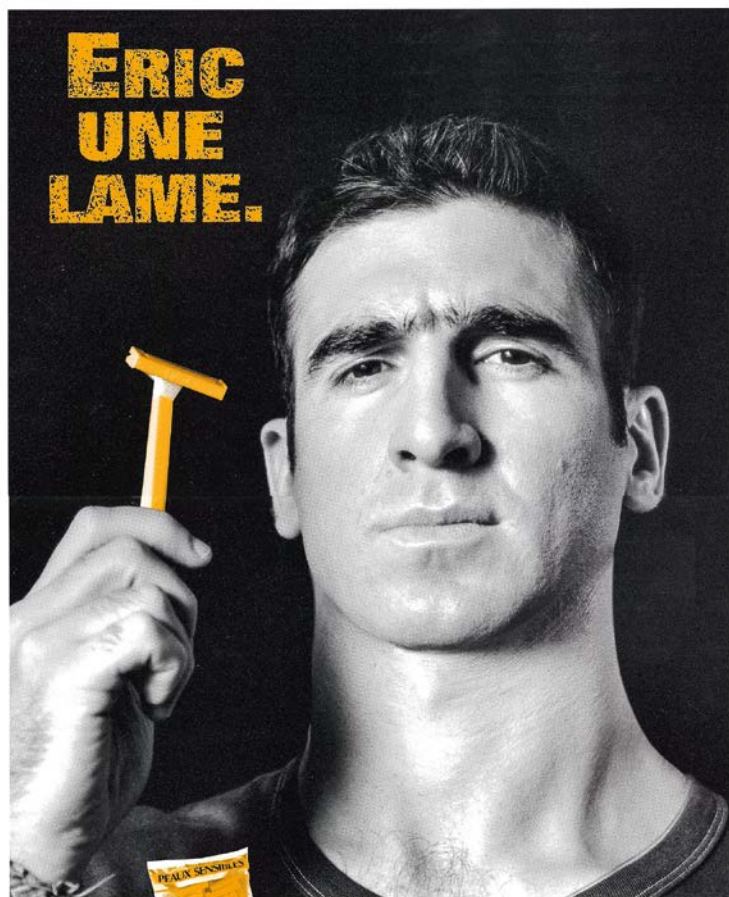
*Wells, Rich, Greene, Inc.*

## Flick My Bic, 1973

In 1973, the first Bic lighter was launched in the United States, competing head on with Cricket, a brand of lighters created in Annecy (France) in 1961, later acquired by Gillette in 1972. To promote the safety and effectiveness of this new product, and in order to conquer the American market, Bic decided to call on the agency Wells Rich Greene, known for its disruptive creativity deployed through brands like Procter & Gamble. Founded by Mary Wells Lawrence, Dick Rich, and Stewart Greene, it would sign in 1976 the brilliant campaign for Alka Seltzer ("Plop plop, Fizz Fizz"), which was also remembered for a long time.

The various commercials produced for Bic feature actors using an expression devised for the occasion by a New Zealand agency: "Flick your Bic".

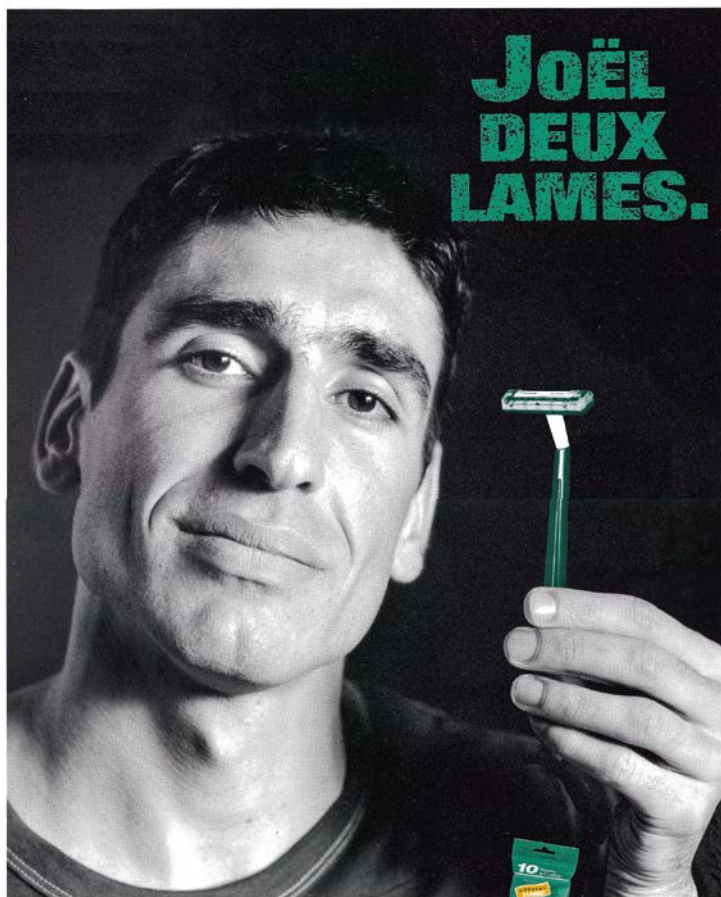
The catchy slogan, playing on a rhyming effect and a humor with double meanings, was immediately adopted by the public to the point where it was recognized as a common expression. "Flick your Bic" becomes synonymous with "light your lighter." This success contributed to the massive and lasting entry of the Bic lighter into American homes. The acid-colored object styling the Cricket on the post, an opponent that no longer has any weight, and that Gillette decided to resell in 1984.



**ERIC  
UNE  
LAME.**



**L'UN EST CELEBRE.**



**JOËL  
DEUX  
LAMES.**



**L'AUTRE LE DEVIENDRA.**



## The Cantona brothers, 1995

In France, in 1995, Bic decided once again to use sports as a means of communication. The brand then bet on two famous football personalities in France: the duo of the Cantona brothers made up of Eric, a member of Manchester United, formerly in the French team, and Joël, a young player from Olympique Marseille. The advertisement imagined by the agency Euro RSCG, in keeping with the purest tradition of the Bic style, delivered a simple but powerful message. It showed the Cantona brothers with distinctive signs of T-shirts stamped Bic, orange for one, green for the other, as well as – the ultimate fashion statement – socks matching the jerseys.

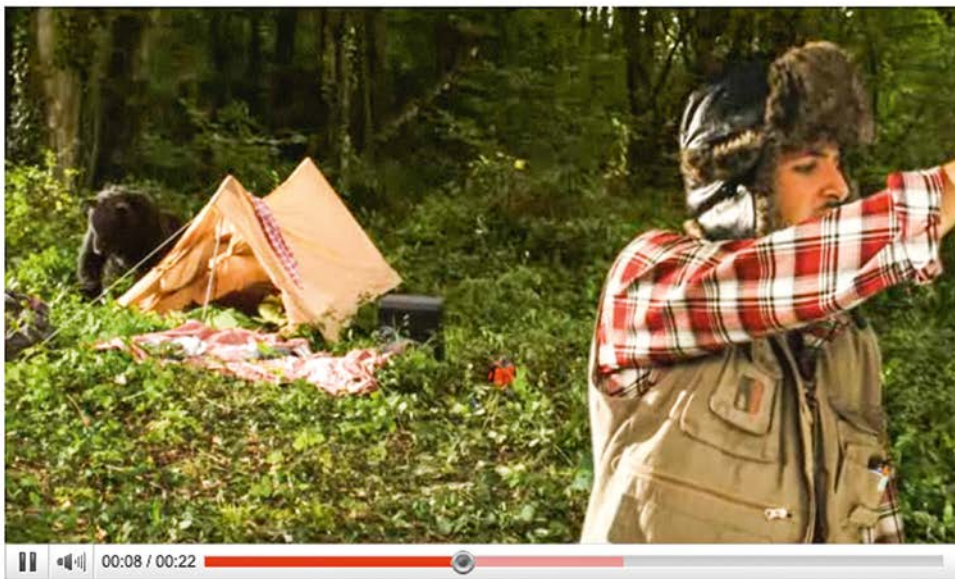
Dramatizing a fraternal complicity not exempt from rivalry, the two athletes with “sensitive skin” proudly announce that they use Bic razors.

The eldest preferred the essential orange razor with a blade, the youngest preferred the latest addition to the range, a green double-blade. The conclusion of the ad: “one is famous and the other would become famous,” was, again, a textbook case in terms of efficiency.

Always with the idea of firmly anchoring itself in the pop culture of the countries where it distributes its products, the company does not hesitate to call on local stars that it promotes in its ads: This is the case of sports presenter Milton Neves in Brazil or tennis player McEnroe in the United States.



## A hunter shoots a bear



doubleXchris | 17 August 2010  
A novice hunter finds a bear in a forest



Save to Share

750283 views

<Embed>



Hungry grizzly#3  
32678 views  
Titan&Louie75



Tod's hunting in North Carolina  
34587 views  
Buzzmanthebossss



Polar bear in danger  
123997 views  
Grangerthebiatch

## *“A hunter shoots a bear”*, an interactive digital campaign for Tipp-Ex, 2010

In 2010, at the start of the school year, European students of all ages were faced with a choice: to save – or not save – a bear from the offensive of a hunter in a countryside, now a classic, offered by the Tipp-Ex brand on YouTube. The advertisement entitled “A hunter shoots a bear” depicts an American trapper caught up in his conscience: faced with the animal’s imminent attack, it is ultimately not his weapon that he draws, but the famous Tipp-Ex “mouse” that he looks for in the adjoining ad! After deleting the word “shoots” from the title, he challenges the Internet user, inviting him to imagine a different ending. Using a revolutionary new technology, the game would modify its source code to allow users to see their decision come to life. Forty-two scenarios were designed by the advertising agency Buzzman: the bear was thus tickled or kissed (in a soft version)!

For a product threatened by the digital tool, this conquest of the Internet is a stroke of genius: more than 50 million views, an interaction of six minutes on average, in nearly 212 countries! A turning point in the international world of advertising, which awarded Tipp-Ex twenty prizes for this viral video. Two years later, the fans find the duo in a context of end of the world, the year 2012 obliges: this time, spectators were able to rewrite History by propelling the two protagonists towards the future or by making them go back to the Stone Age. An inventive way for Bic to promote creativity by taking the slogan of its famous concealer literally: “White and Rewrite”



**Cristal<sup>®</sup>**  
**Original** *fine*  
**À toi**  
**la finesse**  
**du style**



 vous en donne toujours plus !

## Bic: a style ally in Africa, 2016

*"The paths of sapology are impenetrable,"* decrees the fourth commandment of the philosophy of SAPE (Société des ambianceurs et des personnes élégantes [Society of Ambiance and Elegant Persons]). Not for Bic, we want to proclaim! Present in Africa since the 1950s, the group embraces the local way of life. The cultural phenomenon of impressing one's neighbor through neat and original clothing does not escape it. In the Ivory Coast, and in particular in Abidjan, where this art of living born in Congo has found many followers, the ad of the Cristal original fine featured a young student with a dandy look wearing a bow tie, thin glasses and a boater... So many accessories – depicted here in line, inimitable, and in blue ink – which complete the look. Bic pen in hand in a gesture that means "impeccable", the elegant handsome boy has definitely *"the finesse of style"* promised by Bic.

Since this advertisement designed by the agency Caractère Senegal, broadcast in 2016, Bic has further strengthened its positions in sub-Saharan Africa. In Ivory Coast, where Bic has had a manufacturing unit under license since 1974, growth opportunities for the brand in its three flagship categories remain numerous. But in this country, characterized by a strong presence and great advertising creativity, conveying a powerful message and distinguishing oneself is not a futile matter. It is an objective that Bic has nevertheless brilliantly achieved by targeting the aspiring "sappers" of the capital, from Cocody to Yopougon!



**PERFECT FOR  
CANDLES**

**AND  
MORE!**



## “*Pass it*”, Martha Stewart and Snoop Dogg for the EZ Reach Lighter, 2021

One advertisement, two targets: this is the challenge for the Bic brand for this campaign entrusted to the agency Gamma Communications (NYC). Launched in 2021 in the United States, it brings together Martha Stewart, businesswoman and housewife adored by American housewives, and Snoop Dogg, rapper known for his fondness for illicit substances. The real star of this commercial is obviously the new Bic *EZ Reach* lighter, specially designed to light candles and barbecues without getting burned. This innovative product also responds to a new marketing problem: how to sell a lighter in a world where cigarette consumption has sharply dropped?

Two uses have been targeted: lifestyle (the art of living and well-being), which has been booming for several years, particularly with the fashion for decorative candles, but not only... The slogan “*Perfect for Candles and More*”, two opposite personalities, and a full dialogue of irony and innuendo compose an assuredly caustic recipe. Internet users quickly took to it, sharing the video with amusement and enthusiasm.



# Bic in the world

Spread over 4 continents, Bic factories manufacture products that are marketed all over the world.

Established first in France where the industrial know-how has been maintained, production sites were opened abroad from the 1950s. This strategy enabled the group to get closer to its consumers while guaranteeing the very high quality of Bic items, which are produced at a rate of several million units per day.



**10,322** BIC EMPLOYEES  
AROUND THE WORLD

**24** FACTORIES  14\*  6  4

\* Including BIC Graphic Europe (Advertising and promotional products)

**92%** OF BIC® PRODUCTS  
ARE MANUFACTURED  
IN ITS OWN FACTORIES

**28** MILLION BIC PRODUCTS  
ARE CHOSEN DAILY AROUND  
THE WORLD, INCLUDING:

**16.6 million** stationery items (Human Expression),  
**4.4 million** lighters (Flame for Life)  
and **6.7 million** razors (Blade Excellence).





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