

**Specsavers**

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*Annual Report 2008/09*

**Specsavers**



*Specsavers' mission is to be the best value opticians  
and hearing centres, satisfying personal eyecare  
and hearing care needs at affordable prices  
- simply, clearly and consistently*

Introduction



Welcome to the Specsavers Annual Report for the year 2008/09 – and what a year it was!

Now celebrating our 25th anniversary, Specsavers has not only performed well but we have actually surpassed many of our own expectations.

Put this into the context of what is turning out to be the worst global economic depression since the 1930s, with extremely difficult trading conditions, and we can be justifiably proud of how the business has done.

Against this backdrop, we have spent the best part of the past two years spearheading our launch and expansion into Australasia. We therefore know just what it takes to become the number two player in the Australian optical market in less than 12 months. It is no mean feat.

As you will see in this report, this win-win business formula has enabled us to become the international company that we are today and we find it hard to believe that 25 years have passed by so quickly!

However, we do not intend to rest on our laurels. Even in these recessionary times, Specsavers continues to look for new opportunities and although we are tremendously pleased with what we have achieved so far, we feel the best is yet to come for Specsavers.

Doug Perkins  
Chairman – Specsavers Optical Group

Dame Mary Perkins  
Co-founder





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*Specsavers was founded by Doug and Dame Mary Perkins in 1984 and is now the largest privately owned opticians in the world*



## Specsavers at a glance

Total turnover 2008/09 **£1.2 billion**  
 % increase on 2007/08 **15.7%**  
 Total number of frames sold **11.5 million**  
 Total number of partners **over 2,000**  
 Total number of staff **over 26,000**  
 Total number of customers on database **18 million**

**1 UK** Specsavers Opticians  
 Total sales **£828.1 million**  
 First store **1984**  
 % increase in total sales **5.10%**  
 Number of optical stores at end of 2008/09 **620**  
 Number of hearing stores at end of 2008/09 **119**  
 Number of stores opened during the year **26**

**2 ROI** Specsavers Opticians  
 Total sales **£55.8 million**  
 First store **1990**  
 % increase in total sales **2.3%**  
 Number of optical stores at end of 2008/09 **33**  
 Number of hearing stores at end of 2008/09 **7**  
 Number of stores opened during the year **1**

**3 Netherlands** Specsavers Opticiens  
 Total sales **£76.3 million**  
 First store **1997**  
 % increase in total sales **63.8%**  
 Number of optical stores at end of 2008/09 **95**  
 Number of hearing stores at end of 2008/09 **16**  
 Number of stores opened during the year **6**

**4 Sweden** Specsavers Optik  
 Total sales **£52.8 million**  
 First store **2004**  
 % increase in total sales **11.8%**  
 Number of stores at end of 2008/09 **84**  
 Number of stores opened during the year **11**

**5 Norway** Specsavers Optikk  
 Total sales **£42.1 million**  
 First store **2005**  
 % increase in total sales **1.9%**  
 Number of stores at end of 2008/09 **57**  
 Number of stores opened during the year **8**

**6 Denmark** Louis Nielsen  
 Total sales **£49.3 million**  
 First store **2006**  
 % increase in total sales **9.2%**  
 Number of stores at end of 2008/09 **50**  
 Number of stores opened during the year **6**

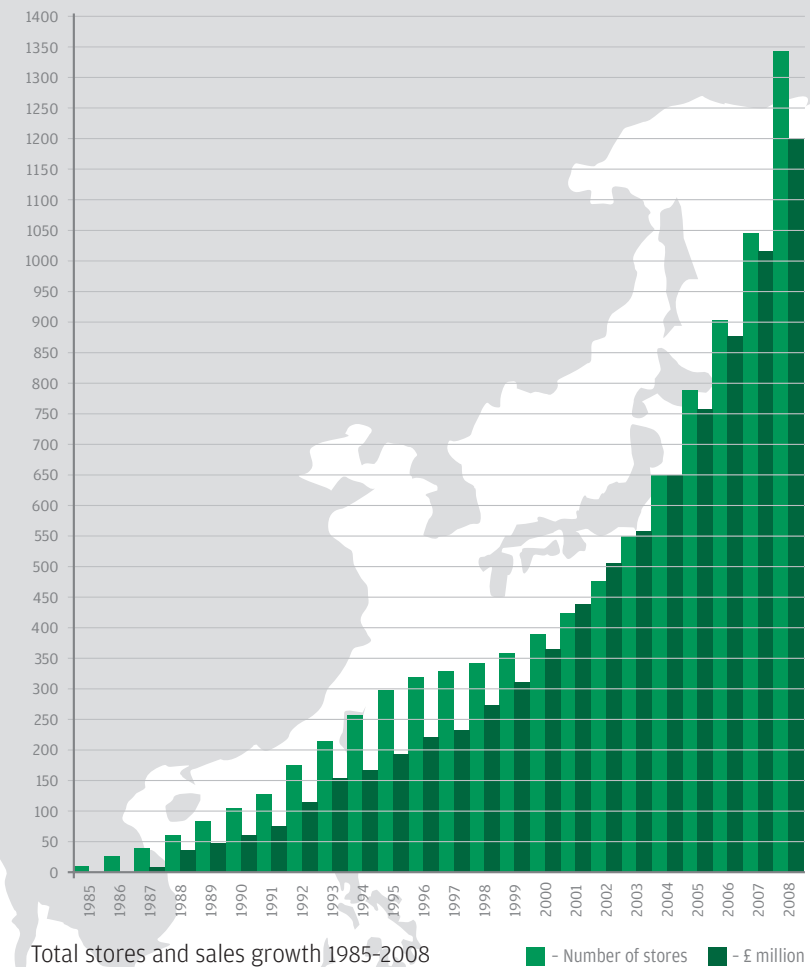
**7 Spain** Specsavers Opticas  
 Total sales **£2.5 million**  
 First store **2006**  
 Number of stores at end of 2008/09 **3**

**8 Finland** Specsavers Optikko  
 Total sales **£23.6 million**  
 First store **2007**  
 Number of stores at end of 2008/09 **89**  
 Number of stores opened during the year **70**

**9 Australia** Specsavers Optometrists  
 Total sales **£50.2 million**  
 First store **2008**  
 Number of stores at end of 2008/09 **157**  
 Number of stores opened during the year **154**

**10 New Zealand** Specsavers Optometrists  
 First store **2008**  
 Number of stores at end of 2008/09 **13**

*The Specsavers year runs from March to February*



*Clockwise from top: Specsavers stores in Australia, the UK and Finland.*

*Specsavers has more than 1,300 stores throughout the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Spain, Australia and New Zealand*





From humble beginnings on a table-tennis table in a spare bedroom in Guernsey to the billion pound global business that it is today, Specsavers Optical Group has achieved an impressive amount in its 25-year history.

Husband and wife Doug and Mary Perkins, both optometrists, had moved to Guernsey where Mary's parents lived, after selling a small chain of opticians in the West Country of England. From there, they opened the first Specsavers on Bond Street in Bristol on 14 February 1984.

That store has since been joined by more than 1,300 stores in the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Spain, Australia and New Zealand. From just two staff working at that table-tennis table there are now over 500 people employed at Specsavers' main office in Guernsey and around 26,000 as part of the wider Specsavers family worldwide.

Back in 1984 Doug and Mary realised that for opticians to really feel a part of their business, they had to have a stake in its ownership and profits and so they developed the groundbreaking joint venture partnership model. Partnership is at the heart of our success and no matter what market we are in, it is the partnership with the professionals that allows the business to continue to grow.

That first Specsavers Opticians in Bristol also signalled the dawn of a new age in optics of value-for-money, quality eyecare and clear pricing. The price displayed on the frames included the lenses - we called it Complete Price. Additional options were also prominently displayed, ensuring the customer knew exactly what they were going to pay before they got to the till. For the first time, glasses were seen not just as a necessity but also as a fashion accessory, helped by the 2 for 1 offer: buy one pair of glasses and the second pair is free. Seen as revolutionary when it was introduced in 1990, 2 for 1 has been much imitated, although never equalled, by competitors over the years.

As our business has evolved, we have secured a reliable and cost-effective supply chain by investing with joint venture partners in our own lens manufacturing laboratories. These are among the largest in Europe and Asia and use the most advanced technology. Our massive buying power has resulted in stores being able to offer a selection of over 2,000 frames to their customers at incredible prices, with new stock arriving every six to eight weeks.

We are the market leader in the UK with 35% market share and are challenging for market leadership in all the other markets we are in. We are the retail market leader in contact lenses in the UK and are the largest provider of home-delivery contact lenses in Europe through our Lensmail service. Our rapidly expanding hearing service is now doing for hearing what we have already achieved in optics - dramatically reducing prices and waiting times and making audiology more accessible for everyone.

Standing still is not an option for us, as we continue to lead by innovation, providing enhanced benefits for both the customer and the partnership.

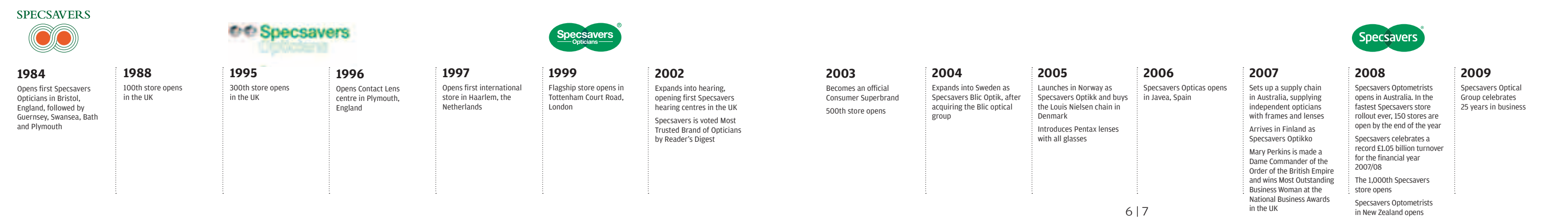
The company remains family owned, led by Doug and Mary and with son John as joint managing director, daughter Julie as country manager in the Netherlands and daughter Cathy working as an audit manager.

## 25 years of Specsavers



Above: The Specsavers store in Victoria, London. Left: The first store in Bond Street, Bristol, opened in 1984.

So whether it is Specsavers Optik, Opticas or Opticiens, the remit remains the same: to be the best value opticians and hearing centres, satisfying personal eyecare and hearcare needs at affordable prices - simply, clearly and consistently.







## Specsavers in the community

Specsavers is not just about high quality, affordable eye and hearing care. As a family-owned business with family values, Specsavers has a culture of giving and a long history of supporting the community. Led by Dame Mary Perkins and with the active involvement of thousands of our staff, we back a wide range of local, national and international charities.

The range of fundraising activity in all our offices and stores is too great to capture in one report; here are some of the highlights of the year.

In the Netherlands we committed to raise £70,000 in support of KNGF Geleidehonden, the national guide dogs charity. The money was raised in the stores through sales of safety firework glasses and puppy-dog toys, and nationally with a sponsored team entry of 50 office and store staff in the annual 10-mile Dam to Dam run, and with eye-catching initiatives such as the sale of puppy-dog art.

Specsavers also takes its responsibility to the wider community very seriously.

We met our target of raising more than £250,000 for Vision Aid Overseas to build a much-needed eyecare clinic and school of optometry in Zambia. Stores throughout the UK opened on Sunday 5 October and donated their day's takings, or a percentage of them, to the charity. Many of our optometrists also worked with VAO in Zambia, carrying out eye examinations and fitting frames. We also continued to give support from all stores, by collecting and recycling glasses for use in less fortunate countries. In the Netherlands we support better eyecare in developing countries through our stores raising funds for the Dutch charity Dark & Light Blind Care.

Diabetes UK continues to be our adopted charity and during the year our stores raised more than £130,000 through donations from sight test fees and local fundraising to support research into retinopathy and blindness in young people. We launched a relationship with Sound Seekers, a UK charity working to improve the lives of deaf children and children suffering from ear disease in developing countries, and continued our local fundraising support for Hearing Dogs for the Deaf.

In line with our mission to provide affordable eyecare to everyone, we source the best value products from around the world making sure they meet our high levels of quality. Having always conducted our business with 'family values' at our heart and making sure that we treat others as we would like to be treated, we formalised this approach in March 2008 when we signed up to a global ethical trading policy. Its goal is to ensure that the Specsavers group and its suppliers continue to provide safe and healthy workplaces for those who make products, where human and civil rights are respected, and take commercially reasonable steps to safeguard natural resources and the environment.



Clockwise from top: Vision Aid overseas initiative, testing eyes in Zambia; Dame Mary Perkins and Sir Steve Redgrave at the launch of Specsavers' partnership with Diabetes UK; Puppy-dog art sold in aid of the national guide dogs charity in the Netherlands.

*Since 2003 a quarter of a million glasses have been collected and recycled by Specsavers stores for Vision Aid Overseas for use in developing countries*



Our activities in 2008/09 were guided by four key objectives:

- Grow the business
- Focus on the customer
- Invest in our people
- Improve effectiveness

Two thousand profitable stores consistently delivering the Specsavers mission, purpose and values by 2012 is the long-term goal set for Specsavers after the 1,000 store target was achieved in November 2007. During 2008/09, we moved 295 stores closer to the new target, opening 37 stores in the UK and Ireland, 101 in the Netherlands and the Nordics, and 167 in Australia and New Zealand.



In the UK – our home market – our objective was to take the Specsavers offer to an even greater number of customers, in the knowledge that our combination of high quality eyecare at low prices would be even more in demand as the economy became tougher. The result: between June 2007 and December 2008 we expanded our market share from 31% to 35% (source GfK). That we achieved this in the face of strong competition is testament to the professionalism and commitment of the entire Specsavers team, and particularly our joint venture partners who rose to the challenge by extending their opening hours, providing excellent service and offering consistent value for money.

*In 2008/09 Specsavers opened 315 stores, relocated 22, expanded 16 and carried out over 100 refits and rebrands*

Grow the business

We were particularly pleased that our record turnover was due to increased numbers of customers rather than an increase in average price paid – ensuring Specsavers remained true to its mission of providing affordable eyecare to everyone.

Our joint venture partners had the support of a formidable team in Guernsey and the UK. Our TV advertising continued to win awards – seven in total – and we took every opportunity to bring the Specsavers concept to the attention of glasses and contact lens wearers. Some of the more unusual promotions included animations on cash machines, a successful viral spoof of the Barclaycard waterslide ad, and the first National Glasses Day backed by Specsavers style ambassador Gok Wan.

We also took the Specsavers hearcare offer to more customers, opening 35 new hearing centres. Already the UK’s leading seller of digital hearing aids and offering the best value professional hearing service on the high street, we are well poised to grow this business still further in the year ahead.

In our international markets, by far the fastest growth rate was in Australia where we began the year with three newly-opened stores and ended with 157. Our growth in Australia benefited immensely from the solid foundations laid the previous year when we supplied frames and lenses to independent optometrists, most of whom chose to join us in the full Specsavers concept. We were also very pleased to open 44 organic (brand new) stores in conjunction with optometrist partners.

We moved into New Zealand in 2008, six months ahead of schedule, acquiring the Torga group of six optical practices and in November opening our first stores in Auckland, Christchurch, Richmond and Lower Hutt. By the end of the year our foothold had grown to 13 stores.



Our developing markets in the Netherlands and the Nordics also enjoyed a good year in a difficult economic climate. In the Netherlands, the ending of a tax rebate on glasses brought record numbers of customers to our stores, with the help of high profile marketing and PR activities focused on our professionalism and value.

In Sweden, we overtook Synoptik to take second place in market share to the market leader Synsam and in September 2008 were named the country’s second ‘hottest brand’ in a survey run by retail magazine Market.

In Norway we celebrated the opening of our 50th store and went on to open eight more, becoming market leader in many of the towns that we are in.

We marked 30 years of Louis Nielsen in Denmark in April 2008 by unveiling a fresh new look in keeping with Specsavers design elements, ensuring a unified Specsavers brand across the Nordic region.

There was tremendous growth and rapid change in Finland where we began with 19 stores and ended with 89. Many new stores came through acquisition – the Tahti Optical Group in April and 26 stores from Eyen in December – but we also opened organic stores in key locations making the most of the tremendous customer response to our concept.



Louis Nielsen  
Part of the Specsavers Group



Clockwise from far left: Interior of Specsavers Opticiens, Roden, the Netherlands; Specsavers Opticiens is named the number one optical retail chain in the Netherlands in a 'National Optician test' carried out by Algemeen Dagblad; Specsavers' 1,000th optical store opens in Carindale, Queensland, Australia, in June 2008; 'Collie Wobble' TV ad wins many prizes and continues the trend for award winning advertising.

All this growth would not be possible without continued investment in our supply chain, enabling us to deliver leading-edge innovation at high quality and low price to partners across the globe. To maintain this competitive advantage, at the end of the year we began construction of a major new optical lab in Mateszalka, a city with a rich optical tradition, in Hungary. It will open later in 2009.



Focus on the customer

“I’m so glad I went to Specsavers,” said Susan Bravo of Bristol on BBC Breakfast News in February 2009 – a quote which no doubt summed up the experience of millions of customers during 2008/09. In Susan’s case the stakes were high: if optometrist Joanne Dunkerley had not noticed swelling of her optic nerve, a brain tumour would have killed her in less than a month.

As a company that was founded and is led by optometrists, Specsavers has an outstanding commitment to professional development and customer service. Some of the highlights of the year include:

- In the UK the installation of over 500 fundus cameras that use state-of-the-art technology to record and store a detailed image of the back of the eye.
- Our campaign in the Netherlands for regulation of the optician profession, including the handover of a 40,000-signature petition to politicians in The Hague.
- The establishment of a foundation degree in Hearing Aid Audiology at Anglia Ruskin University.
- The PAC conference in Birmingham, the largest one-day clinical conference in Europe, attended by 1,000 opticians from the UK, Europe and Australia.
- A new online learning tool, the Learning Management System, for clinical staff in the UK, Europe and Australia.

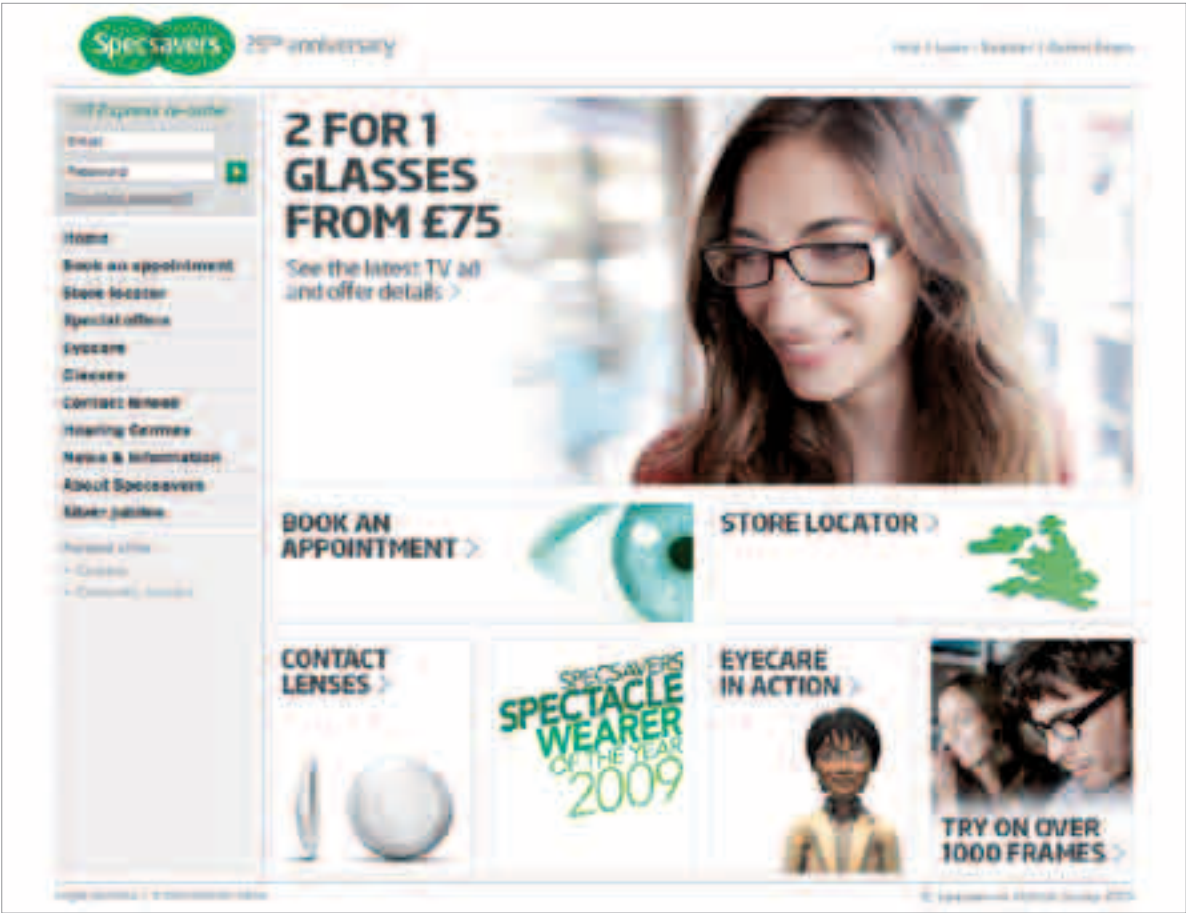
Our product development team maintained their focus on innovation at affordable prices, with the launch of the Freeform progressive lens which is tailor-made to a customer’s prescription using an advanced computer-driven manufacturing process, as well as the Drivewear progressive lens - the first varifocal photochromic lens that reacts behind a windscreen. Our frame buying team also continued the drive to provide customers with the widest choice of glasses, with over 600 new styles introduced to the range during the year and three new brands added to the existing designer ranges.

Focus on the customer for Specsavers is about remaining true to our mission of ensuring that we always provide the best value in the market. ‘Super September’ in the UK and Ireland saw the launch of a free scratch-resistant treatment on all our lenses and even lower varifocal prices. In the Nordics, we responded to tough economic times with even lower prices across the range.

We significantly improved the online experience across all markets for the customer during the year. The new Specsavers website went live in March 2008, with much improved information about our business, products and offers and the opportunity to buy glasses and contact lenses online. One of the most popular new features was the digital mirror that enables customers to see how they look in different glasses styles on screen. Communication with customers was also improved with the expansion of our call centre, which moved to new premises in Nottingham during the year and became operational 24 hours a day.

So how do we know whether our focus on the customer is succeeding? We invest continually in customer satisfaction research, including mystery shopping for all our stores, to ensure we are delivering what the customer wants and needs. And in 2008, we were delighted to receive once again independent confirmation from Reader’s Digest that we are the UK’s ‘Most Trusted’ optician brand, receiving 41% of the vote. As this Annual Report went to press in 2009, Specsavers won that award for the eighth time.

Specsavers employs more than 26,000 staff



Clockwise from top: Homepage of our website; Operating a fundus camera at our Sutton Coldfield, UK store; Wendela Jensen, suffering due to whiplash in a car accident, went to Specsavers in Bergen, Norway, where she praised Specsavers for giving her the life back through sight training and lenses with prisms.





Invest in our people

You don't need 20/20 vision to see that without investing in our people, we would not be able to deliver our ambitious growth plans and we certainly would not achieve the levels of customer satisfaction that we do.

Our stores are owned and run by optician, hearing and retail professionals in a joint venture or franchise partnership, and we invest significantly in the development of that partnership by inspiring our own staff to give the best possible support services to partners and by involving partners in the development and implementation of strategies for the business. In all our markets, we invest in strong two-way communications with partners. The national seminar in December 2008 for the UK and Ireland was the biggest yet, attracting over 1,500 partners.

During the year we relaunched 'Top Team', ensuring key senior store staff feel even more valued, offering competitive reward packages and excellent training and development.

We continued to support the education and development of our professional staff in all countries with accredited training courses and materials. We have a dedicated infrastructure of regional training centres, in-store trainers and a mobile training team. More than 11,575 store staff received training as part of a career development plan, including 1,327 staff workshops and operational training days.

We are the only optical retailer in the world to offer live and recorded web-based training sessions. The building blocks of our Specsavers Academy are now in place to expand the Academy into all our markets and take professionalism and continuous education to even higher standards.

2008/09 saw a major step forward in our investment in the 2000 directly employed people who support our stores, and help to set the direction for the company.

In October 2008 we opened the new Northern Regional Office in Nottingham, providing first-class offices for around 140 people from the call centre, product development, lab training team and our UK-based finance team. We also began work on a new Southern Regional Office in Southampton that will open in July 2009, bringing together the UK-based IT, HR, training and procurement departments.

We expanded our group office in Guernsey, acquiring an additional building next to La Villiaze for more meeting rooms. And in Melbourne, where we had quickly outgrown our office and manufacturing base, we agreed a major move to a new base in Port Melbourne in June 2009, incorporating manufacturing, storage, business development, professional services, marketing, retail, the call centre and the training academy.

As well as improving working conditions, we made a significant investment in our human resources function, beginning with the appointment in September 2008 of Pauline Best as our first Group HR Director.



Specsavers has always been a great place to work, with strong family values, attracting people with entrepreneurial drive and passion for what they do. But to achieve our ambitious long-term goals we recognised that we needed to bring more consistency and structure to our HR function. We now have a clear people plan for the organisation, a vision for what we want to achieve and many advances being made in key areas such as learning and development, resourcing, reward and recognition, organisation and change and communication and involvement.



Clockwise from top: Specsavers placed 42nd in the Sunday Times 100 Best Mid-Sized Companies To Work For survey; The national seminar for UK and Ireland in December, attended by 1,500 partners; Staff in our new Northern Regional Office, Nottingham; lab at Specsavers Opticiens, Roden, the Netherlands.



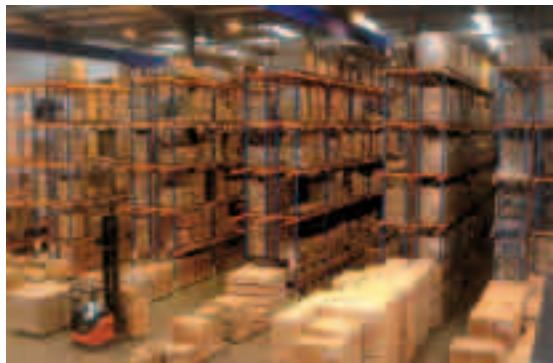
**The Specsavers People Strategy – the Vision**  
How we want people to feel as they work for us

Annual turnover of the Specsavers Group was a record £1.2 billion for the financial year 2008/09



Improve effectiveness

Our final objective for the year was to improve effectiveness. A key factor in the success of Specsavers' mission to make eyecare more affordable is our constant focus on driving down cost, being more productive and managing risk. This ensures we can protect the profitability of our partners, while providing additional value to our customers. A lot of the work under this objective happens behind the scenes by our dedicated team across the business, including Europe and the Far East: here we highlight a few notable advances and successes in 2008/09.



The development of global procurement to reduce costs to the stores – our buying power has enabled us to negotiate competitive rates for a range of commodities, while ensuring ethical trade practices are maintained.



Contact lens multi-language packaging for each individual own brand product, allowing all packs to be used in all our markets.



Developing more efficient ways of working – including the introduction of automated financial solutions that improve our service to the stores.



Improving productivity – for example the December project, bringing more customers to our stores at a traditionally quiet time of the year.

All these initiatives, and many more, are examples of how our 'keep it simple' culture enables us to provide cost-effective world-class solutions to our partners - all over the globe.

Conclusion



When Doug and Mary started Specsavers Opticians with one store on Bond Street in Bristol, England in 1984, I don't think anyone could have envisaged that the business would have grown to the size and stature that it has become today.

In these belt-tightening times, people increasingly look for value for money and Specsavers has been very well placed to offer this. As well as our phenomenal expansion into Australasia, we have also continued to expand and strengthen in our existing markets.

This has all been achieved by the drive and commitment of the people that work for Specsavers. It is this dedication to spreading the Specsavers 'family values' ethos that will ensure that we are able to continue to offer high-quality, affordable eyecare and hearing services to all.

I am extremely proud to be a part of leading Specsavers Optical Group into our next quarter-century. And as the largest optician-led group in the world, we remain totally committed to making sure that we continue to set the standards for optical excellence.

John Perkins  
Joint managing director – Specsavers Optical Group



**SohoGothicSpecsavers**  
**AmplitudeSpecsavers**

Introducing one consistent logo and font for the business – strengthening our global brand, and bringing down the cost of signage and print-buying.

*Specsavers is the largest retail provider of home delivery contact lenses in Europe and the second largest retail supplier of continuous wear lenses in the world*



# The Specsavers Board



**Doug Perkins**  
**Chairman and Joint Managing Director**

A qualified and registered optometrist, Doug is responsible for the overall success of the Group. He and his wife Mary established Specsavers in 1984 with its unique joint venture partnership concept, and the mission of making eyecare more affordable. In 2006 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Anglia University. He has spent much of the past year based in Melbourne, leading Specsavers expansion into Australia and New Zealand.



**Dame Mary Perkins**  
**Co-founder**

Also a qualified and registered optometrist, Mary monitors the culture and direction of the company and oversees its professional and consumer reputation. She plays an active role on a number of national and local charities and was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2007. The same year she won the Most Outstanding Woman in Business Award at the National Business Awards.



**John Perkins**  
**Joint Managing Director**

John joined Specsavers in 1998 and worked in UK operations and the international teams before joining the Board as Commercial Director in 2003. In July 2007 he was appointed Joint Managing Director with his father Doug. A qualified chartered accountant with an MBA in retailing, John spent five years with Deloitte and Touche before joining Specsavers.



**Derek Dyson**  
**Retail Director**

Derek joined Specsavers in 1998 with responsibility for UK operations, procurement, business development, property, business transfer service as well as professional recruitment and training. Before Specsavers he spent 24 years with Tesco, progressing from trainee store manager to retail operations director.



**Nigel Parker**  
**Group Product Director**

Nigel joined the Board in 2006, taking on responsibility for product development, the sourcing of frames, contact lenses, spectacles and accessories and for global procurement. Later he also took on responsibility for the group's commercial and international expansion activity. He joined Specsavers from Essilor in 1997 and became Director of Ophthalmic Lens Development and then Director of Commercial Development.



**Richard Holmes**  
**Group Marketing Director**

Richard joined the Board in 2007 as Marketing Director, responsible for the development of the global brand and for marketing and PR activity in all countries. He previously worked for Unilever for 13 years focusing on fast moving consumer goods, and was based in London, Paris and Milan. He then held a number of different marketing director roles over 10 years at Boots, where he was responsible for the launch of their Advantage Card programme.



**Pauline Best**  
**Group Human Resources Director**

Pauline joined Specsavers in September 2008 as Group HR Director, responsible for all elements of people strategy and activity across the group. Before joining Specsavers she spent 20 years working in mobile communications, including 12 years with Vodafone where she was most recently their global leadership, talent and people capability director.



**John Lister**  
**Chief Information Officer**  
(from April 2009)

John joined in January 2009 and took over from Michel Khan as Chief Information Officer on 9 April. His past experience includes six years as CIO at BUPA, three years as European CIO at Tesco and six years at ASDA. He has also worked abroad in the airline and financial services industry.

*Specsavers optical stores and hearing centres are owned and run by joint venture or franchise partners*



Contact details

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Auckland 0632  
  
Tel 0064 (0)9 525 9711

Partnership opportunities with Specsavers

If you are interested in finding out more about an *optical* partnership in the UK and ROI please contact Chris Howarth:  
Tel 0044 (0)1695 554200

If you are interested in finding out more about a *hearing* partnership in the UK and ROI please contact Bill Edgar:  
Tel 0044 (0)7748 333292

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**Netherlands**  
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**Australia**  
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**New Zealand**  
John L Scott  
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For all other partnership opportunities please contact Matt Scott:  
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