



Lance Keziah, CEO, Crypton

Lance Keziah has served as the CEO of the Crypton companies for the past five years. Despite the fact that half of his time as CEO has been during a pandemic, Keziah has not slowed down on the execution of his strategy for Crypton's growth across existing verticals, as well as discovering and creating new paths of expansion for the fully integrated producer of high-performance textiles in the contract, home and apparel markets.

WINDOW FASHION VISION:
How important is research and development in your growth strategy?

LANCE KEZIAH:
Research and development has always been in the DNA of the company. If you look back at the company's 29-year history, we used to create all our fabrics with polyester. I certainly love polyester's durable fibers and how it can withstand lots of wear and tear.

Our chemists continue to figure out ways we can optimize technology so we can perform at the highest level. We use technology to create new ways to weave and finish our fabrics. For instance, even though people were afraid of cotton



because of it getting stained, we created the technology to be able to weave the fabric so we could produce a high-performance cotton fabric.

WFFV: Why was it important for Crypton to become a vertically integrated company?
LK: Two years ago, we were able to purchase Abercrombie Textiles in Cliffsides, NC. Abercrombie was a Crypton-licensed mill partner for 17 years, but, unfortunately, the mill fell on hard times and was going to be shut down. Since we were interested in becoming more vertical and doing more domestic sourcing for our fabrics, we wanted to invest in our domestic manufacturing capabilities. There has always been certain materials that we have had to import but we knew could be made domestically.

We bought the mill and have increased the number of employees from 21 to 93 and made significant investments in the plant, its people and its technology. We renamed it Crypton Mills and it is now the largest employer in the county.

Not only did we think it was smart business to purchase the mill, but it was also good business. Through the purchase, we had the opportunity to maintain a domestic textile company and

not only save jobs but create jobs. Today, with imported goods, there are longer lead times, increased tariffs and higher shipping costs; so, it is the company that has product in stock that is going to win the business. And, now, we can add to our value proposition being able to deliver product to customers in four to six weeks.

In addition to the production of its own fabrics, Crypton Mills will also continue to weave jacquard and dobby fabrics for upholstery, wallcovering, drapery and decorative accents in the residential, hospitality, contract, transportation and health care markets.

Crypton Mills also allows us to control our sourcing strategy. Through our work at the mill, we have also been able to increase the design and manufacturing of products for both our Crypton Home line and contract work.

And the mill's proximity to Crypton's manufacturing facility in Kings Mountain, NC, makes it that much more advantageous for business expansion.

WFFV: How else is Crypton Mills impacting your business?
LK: Having the mill separates us from other domestic manufacturers. We are bringing in the yarn and using our own twisting equipment to make yarns with novelty effects, as well as creating texture within our fabrics. There are specific requirements to making textural fabrics and we have invested heavily to be able to do so.

There also aren't a lot of domestic mills that manufacture upholstery fabric. Crypton Mills really sets a part as we now have our own processes. We also see the opportunity to utilize technology and, over time, to develop and bring to market



new fabrics. Over the past three years, we have seen double-digit growth in Crypton Home and, by being able to continue offering well-designed and stylish fabrics that are cleanable and kid-friendly, we are able to continue to increase our market share.

WFFV: How is important is sustainability and transparency to Crypton?
LK: At every level, we are committed to produce sustainable textiles. It isn't important in how we make our yarns but also how we finish our fabrics. Sustainability is part of our DNA. We focus a lot on how we source our raw materials, because how we source the raw materials really dictates how we can produce the most efficient products.

WFFV: Where do you see the Crypton companies in five years?
LK: Through our continued investment in research and development, we will continue to grow as an industry leader. We have used technology to expand our product line and we want to continue to expand. We are also seeing our global footprint continue to grow. And we continue to be able to decrease our dependence from having to purchase materials from China, India and Taiwan. Crypton Mills will continue to allow us to be able to continue to shift and decrease our purchase of domestic materials.

When we acquired the mill, we picked five things we really want to be good at producing and we will continue to develop the performance level of the plant to achieve these goals. When we acquired the mill, we first wanted to focus on becoming experts in the fabrics we wanted to produce. Then, we will look for other ancillary businesses and opportunities that can come from the ownership of the mill. We also will continue our focus on innovation. □