

TEXTILE GURU MICHAEL (MICKEY) SOLOMON

Few people in the industry know as much about textiles as Mickey Solomon, co-founder of Gladson New York, representing several European fabric mills including Vitale Barberis Canonico, Italy's oldest (1663) and largest luxury mill.

How did you get into the textile business?

My father came from a large family living on the lower east side of New York. His siblings included four brothers who sought employment in the textile industry. (The fifth brother had the good sense to become a bookie!) My father eventually came to run the US affiliate of a textile company, John Emsley Ltd, based in Yorkshire, England. The company specialized in producing mohair/wool fabrics, popular in the U.S. in the 1950s and 60s, particularly for weddings and bar mitzvahs.

After finishing active duty in the U.S. Army reserve, I joined the company that my father ran in 1961. John F. Kennedy was president, the men's clothing business in the U.S. was booming, and the consumption of men's tailored clothing reached approximately 23 million sleeve units annually, virtually all made in the U.S. Little did I know that this would turn out to be the peak consumption of formal clothing in the U.S.

Fast forward to the present and your partnership with VBC...

It's the story of bringing fine Italian menswear fabrics to the U.S. Many British and domestic mills closed their doors in the 1960s & 70s, largely due to competition from Japan. Their disappearance created a vacuum at the top end of the market. We saw the potential for bringing in finer fabrics with finer yarn counts by working closely with VBC, who was already changing to finer yarn counts and wool grades in the 1980s. By the early 1990s, VBC's sales director showed up at our NYC office with the first edition of a honey-colored leather swatch book stamped in gold with the words: 56 Classics, Sole Distributor- Gladson Ltd. This was the first ever stock-supported program in VBC's history. A new edition of this book, called the Best of Vitale Barberis Canonico, has just been issued. It features a curated selection of VBC's top performing designs and colors, plus new patterns and colors developed exclusively by Gladson.



● ● ●
**“EMBRACE
 CHANGE; DON'T
 BE AFRAID OF IT!”**

—MICKEY SOLOMON

Your best advice now to those in the men's clothing industry?

Embrace change. Don't be afraid of it. Differentiate yourself from the competition and consider not just new fabrics and models but also new ways of doing business. Clearly, we're seeing a paradigm shift in how men dress, yet no one has come up with a viable alternative to the traditional suit. Every time a new trend came along—double knits, leisure suits—it ran its course and we jumped right back to the traditional suit. It's 2024; we must be realistic. We're not returning to mandated dress codes; we're not even returning to five days in the office. The good news: many men are increasingly receptive to newness, opening avenues of opportunity for creative mills, manufacturers, and retailers.