



BIENVENUE A TRUE PIONEER IN THE ART OF HOSPITALITY



Once upon a time there was Bienvenue

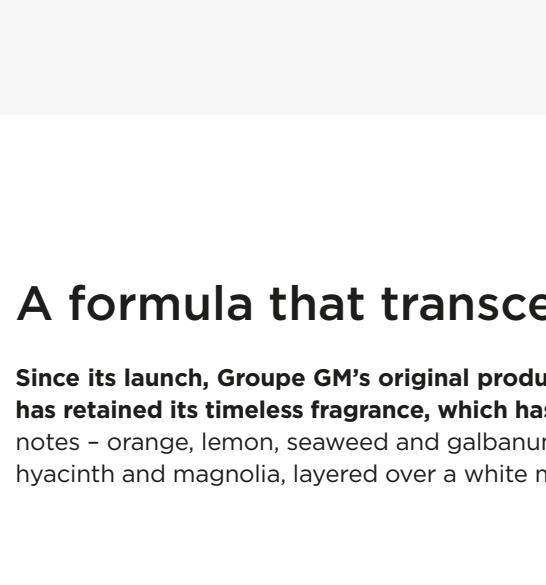
In 1975, the Groupe GM created its first brand, the well-named Bienvenue, which was also the first collection of cosmetic products to be developed in France for the hotel industry.

Known all around the world, where it is pronounced in a multitude of accents, the French word "bienvenue" carries greater symbolic weight than its English equivalent, "welcome". It embodies the elegance, grandeur and prominence of the universal art of hospitality.

Its founder, Georges Marchand, was a self-taught man with an adventurous soul – not the kind of person destined to reinvent the concept of hotel amenities. An apprentice ironmonger, he learned to fly aeroplanes and spent some time in the army before embarking on a brilliant sales career, selling cars and fine books, as well as reproductions of artworks by great masters such as Renoir, Monet and Picasso, which he sold by mail order, often to hotels.

From idea to reality

It was through his many meetings with customers, in particular hotel managers and suppliers, and thanks to his impressive network of contacts that George Marchand had the idea of creating a range of miniature branded toiletries. In Paris in the 1970s, anything was possible. It was then that George Marchand met his future business partner, who wanted to sell small bars of soap to hotels, as well as non-woven fabric, with which he wanted to make wash cloths. The pair presented their finished products in 1972 at EquipHotel, a trade fair for professionals in the hotel industry.



Hospitality products: the beginnings

At that time, the concept of products provided free to hotel guests – such as soaps, shampoos and other products in small sizes placed in a corner of the bathroom – was still in its infancy. At the 1972 EquipHotel trade fair, Palmolive was the only brand to present 15 g soaps on their stand. Prior to that, the only items used to convey a hotel's brand image were the famous matchboxes, which were customised with a hotel's logo and given to guests.



Say it with a flower

In 1975, alongside his career as a representative for several manufacturing companies, including L'Oréal and its hugely successful Ô de Lancôme hotel amenity range, Georges Marchand founded the company Afi, which was managed by his wife, in order to launch his first line of amenity products.

He then had the brilliant idea of asking an Argentinian artist, a revolutionary in exile in France, to create the design for the products. It was a first. The artist drew a flower, a symbol of hospitality and the art of receiving guests, and this design has been the Bienvenue brand's logo for more than 40 years. Ahead of his time, Marchand was conscious of the importance of a brand's visual identity. In addition, the French term "produit d'accueil" (welcome or amenity product) was inspired by his father-in-law, a designer who headed the first product catalogue with a bouquet of flowers and the word "accueillir" (to welcome).



A formula that transcends time

Since its launch, Groupe GM's original product line has been much enhanced and developed, but it has retained its timeless fragrance, which has proved as appealing as ever over the years. Citrus top notes – orange, lemon, seaweed and galbanum – are blended with middle notes of jasmine, cyclamen, hyacinth and magnolia, layered over a white musk base note.

A new design to celebrate 40 years

For the brand's 40th anniversary in 2016, the collection was given a makeover with a new, updated logo. The flower is still there, but in a simplified, five-petal version. For all of the products and sizes in the collection, from bottles and tubes to the Ecopump and pleated paper, it's all about the details. The new design is even more beautiful, sleek and elegant. Bienvenue has grown into a fine 40-year-old, born out of the curiosity and open-mindedness of a man who moved with the times, seized opportunities, had faith and surrounded himself with the right people.

