

## Executive recruitment in luxury

By Corinne DELIAS, Client Partner at Alexander Hughes Paris

**Luxury has always been a fairly feminine environment and** the recruitment up to middle management positions in the sector has followed the trend by actively integrating qualified women in fashion and cosmetics companies.

Women hold the majority of Studio positions (stylist or pattern maker positions) and Communication roles in the fashion industry, Marketing functions in perfume and cosmetics brands.

Over time the gender gap has become so apparent that some major luxury groups are working on gender equality in order to rebalance the share of men in their ranks.

**Yet, the dominance of women in the sector is not ubiquitous and most of the top roles have been mainly in the hands of men.** The position of Artistic Director (DA) is clearly an example. Major fashion houses have recently appointed female professionals such as Maria Grazia Chiuri at Christian Dior, Clare Waight Keller at Givenchy in this role whereas the artistic directors of the leading brands were historically men -Tom Ford, Karl Lagerfeld, Alber Elbaz, Marc Jacobs, John Galliano- to name a few.

This wave of appointments is the result of two main factors: the benefit of a strong pipeline and a wider pool of high potential female talents ready to take the challenges of this role and the fact that, today, the fashion houses are willing to put at the head of the "Style" women able to understand fashion from a woman's perspective, desires and expectations ... in order to develop sales.



In a similar way, in the past 15 years, women have gained a strong presence in the Executive Committees, in roles such as Human Resources Director, Communications Director, VP Merchandising ... but rarely as President -a traditional male bastion-. This is also gradually changing as the recent appointments of women at the head of Celine, Boucheron and Kenzo indicate.

It is simply a matter of time and discipline to identify and prepare the right candidates for the "chief" role. This requires having in place both an annual appraisal process with a strong focus on the identification of high potential women and individual development plans combined with internal succession plans who have at heart gender parity.

**Women have their place in leadership positions in the luxury world but they have to plan wisely their career progression to be able to secure the top picks.**

By choosing the next career move, they have to keep in mind that some roles have gained prominence in the luxury sector and today the top roles include:

**\*\* Collection Merchandising and Retail Merchandising** –How to structure international collections taking into account both sale capacity and local markets' specific needs

**\*\* Retail management**

**\*\* Roles around the ability to create a consistent Shopping experience** on all distribution channels (Ecommerce and Boutiques)

**\*\* Digital roles** (CRM, Social Networks ...)

A key challenge is to avoid the temptation of staying at headquarters when changing roles. **Working abroad** is a clear competitive advantage that can't be overlooked. This allows to be free of an ethnocentric vision of the world and to acquire an invaluable experience when adapting the collections and tools to local needs. Women have to be more mobile ... with family of course!

About **Corinne Delias**:

**Corinne Delias** has developed a strong expertise in both Marketing and Human Resources through various assignments in France and abroad in major listed companies such as P&G, LVMH and REXEL as well as family-owned companies.

She started her career in China with TOTAL and then joined PROCTER & GAMBLE in France. After 8 years in B to C Marketing, she turned to Human Resources when joining LVMH group to develop the Employer Branding and the Talent Pool for the Group in 1995. She then held various HR Director positions with MOET-HENNESSY and KENZO Perfumes and Fashion. When joining REXEL as the Group Sourcing and Talent Management VP in 2004, she managed HR in B to B distribution networks in nearly 30 countries.

In 2009, she created her own consulting company, specialized in Talent and Change Management for a large variety of clients in Fashion, Retail, Consulting and Publishing.

Combining a deep understanding of companies' organizations and strategies in changing international environments, with a recognized expertise in evaluating people, she joined the Paris office of Alexander Hughes as a Client Partner in 2015 to develop the **"Luxury, Fashion and Retail" practice with the role of Executive Team Assessment Practice leader.**

Corinne is a graduate of Sciences Po Paris and HEC School of management and is fluent in French and English, understands German and Mandarin plus a bit of Hindi.

Some of **our recent references**:

- ✓ BU Director – Accessories for a major international fine jewelry brand,
- ✓ Visual merchandizer Director for a Belgian very exclusive leather goods brand
- ✓ Human Resources Director for a Luxury Fashion brand,
- ✓ Marketing and Communication Director for a lifestyle fashion brand,
- ✓ General brand for a lifestyle fashion brand,
- ✓ Financial Director for a fashion designer brand
- ✓ International director for a fashion designer brand

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