

2023

TOP WOMEN IN RETAIL



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WOMEN IN RETAIL LEADERSHIP CIRCLE IS PROUD TO PRESENT ITS 13TH ANNUAL TOP WOMEN IN RETAIL REPORT

Women, as we've known all along, are powerful leaders. Now the world is starting to understand this as well. As I write this, I've learned that for the first time in the *Fortune 500* list's 68-year history, more than 10 percent of *Fortune 500* companies are led by women. While 10 percent is still an unacceptably low number — and many women CEOs in the retail space have been replaced by male colleagues recently — we can take solace in the fact that we're moving in the right direction. And there's more good news here as well: The *Fortune 500*, which ranks the largest businesses in the United States by revenue, serves as a microcosm for business at large. So when more women run companies, it reflects the improving status of gender diversity in corporate leadership beyond this top cohort.

That's why for the 13th edition of our Top Women in Retail report, we decided to focus exclusively on C-suite leaders and company founders. These women executives are leading the charge for the next generation of female leaders — and leading their individual companies to success as well.

So, how did we decide which C-suite leaders to honor? Honorees were selected by our editorial staff as well as nominated by WIRLC members, *Inner Circle* newsletter subscribers, WIRLC partners, and retail industry insiders. Yes, the women featured in this report were chosen based on their titles, but we also took into account their leadership acumen. For example, these women have helped their companies to grow and thrive, built and managed great teams, implemented new strategic initiatives, mentored and sponsored colleagues, and advocated for the greater retail industry.

As part of their inclusion, all honorees answered a series of questions that offered insights into their careers, their secrets to success, their leadership styles, and more. Among other things, you'll learn about career risks they've taken and how they paid off for them; how their roles have evolved over time;

technology trends they're tracking; how they motivate their teams; what they're doing to inspire the next generation of women leaders; and more. You'll also hear about how these executives are taking the lead on diversity, equity and inclusion programs at their companies, as well as moving the needle toward more representation in the tech and retail tech industries. Lastly, for some fun, we learn what the honorees' favorite books and movies are; some surprising facts about them; and more.

This report also features our third annual list of Women on the Rise. These executives are forging their paths to being the next great leaders in the retail industry. The Women on the Rise honorees, all of whom were nominated by WIRLC members, *Inner Circle* newsletter subscribers, WIRLC partners, and retail industry insiders, are directors of various departments and/or teams within their organizations, including brand management, communications, merchandising, and more. In interviews with the On the Rise honorees, you'll learn the skills that they believe have been instrumental in their career development; the role mentorship has played in their careers, among other factors that have positioned them for current and future success.

We hope you enjoy this special report, and leverage our honorees' wisdom to help move your career forward! We believe this annual report can serve as both inspiration and motivation to help all women excel in their careers. Lastly, if you have any recommendations for women you would like to see featured in the 2024 Top Women in Retail report, please send me a note at mcampanelli@napco.com.

Melissa

*All responses have been edited for length and clarity.



PRAMA BHATT
CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICER, ULTA BEAUTY

Can you tell us about your career journey and your role at Ulta Beauty?

I lead the digital team. I've been at Ulta Beauty for about eight-and-a-half years. It's been such a fun journey with the team as we move on our digital and omnichannel journey. Digital at Ulta Beauty is the e-commerce business, which includes our website, app and omnichannel business; it's our digital experience road map and operations. It's digital innovation as well as strategic analytics and data for our go-to-market strategies, and eventually our enterprise analytics strategies.

I've been in retail for about 20 years with fun brands like Toys"R"Us and Kenneth Cole, both in the brick-and-mortar and digital space. Prior to retail, I grew up in the auto industry for about a decade. I was an engineer and really learned about design, development and manufacturing with truck engines. So I always talk about going from truck engines to lip gloss, which is always fun! I've really appreciated that foundation in my career. Between spending a decade in the auto industry and 20 years in retail, I had a little bit of time as a management consultant, and that was also a really tremendous learning experience.

Since joining Ulta in 2014, your forward-thinking visionary approach has fueled e-commerce growth, which now accounts for more than 20 percent of total company sales. What do you attribute to this success?

I would attribute it to three things. First, the people, the values-based culture and the team that we have at Ulta Beauty. We live in a very collaborative, inclusive culture, and that allows our team members to thrive, be innovative, and solve problems.

Second, the brand, company and value proposition are really suited and make a lot of sense when we think about this industry. We're very customer focused, very fact based, so that's really been a big part of the fuel. The company has an amazing value proposition. We carry beauty products that range and price points that cover categories like hair, skin and makeup. We have services and a salon in every store, and an amazing loyalty program. When you bring that whole Ulta Beauty value proposition to market, it's a perfect place for digital to engage across all of those touchpoints and amplify the value proposition.

Third, having a lot of support. I remember when I first joined Ulta Beauty, I had a lot of support strategically about the importance of digital as a channel-agnostic approach to how we think about delivering growth.

Ulta is a leader in innovative projects and experiences. Why is it important to disrupt and drive the industry forward?

Retail is dynamic for those of us that have lived in the space; it's moving and growing every day. Beauty is also dynamic. We often talk about moving at the speed of beauty, and there's a highly engaged beauty enthusiast out there. We also feel so privileged to have the loyalty program that we do. The majority of our sales are coming through loyalty members. When you build strong relationships with your customers, you should be able to tap into insights, understand their needs, and create experiences that really serve them well and guide them on their beauty journey.

We have every right to help shape how we're thinking about future beauty journeys and beauty experiences, connecting the dots between technology and the types of experiences we can impact, whether they're more personalized, more immersive, or more fun and engaging in terms of discovering beauty. It's really important for us not only to keep up with the pace, but also to shape the future of the beauty journey.

How would you describe your leadership style, and how do you motivate and inspire your team?

We have so much passion in the company around our mission and brand, as well as a real belief in the work that we do. Collectively the work that we're doing is helping our members and beauty enthusiasts use the power of beauty to bring the possibilities to life. Having that purpose really helps motivate most of us, because we can really relate to and appreciate the mission of the company. That's a big part of how I think about leading: asking how we connect the dots with every single action each team member is taking and link it back to that broader mission. As leaders, it's our responsibility to help build that bridge to that mission.

I tend to have a really open door policy and I don't think hierarchically. I think of myself as a consumer half the time. Or when I have feedback about our experience, I think about it like a beauty junkie as if I was shopping on the site. I'm also really fact based. That might be the engineer and analytics side in me, but I think it really lends itself well to digital.

There can be lots of opinions and different points of view, but that's the beauty of digital and data. You can blend your intuitive understanding of experiences or your qualitative understanding and mash it up with quantitative to help that guide the way.

Leading with a lot of integrity and transparency is also a part of my leadership style.

Why is it important for more women to join the tech industry?

We're all collectively on this DEI journey. In every consumer landscape, the demographics are really important. For us, representation in every part of our experience is important. It makes sense to translate that to digital and technology as well. We're making sure from a pure representation perspective that we're matching who our customers are across all of our processes and all of our capabilities. We all want to be really open to inclusive thought of different ideas and different perspectives. And that only happens by bringing

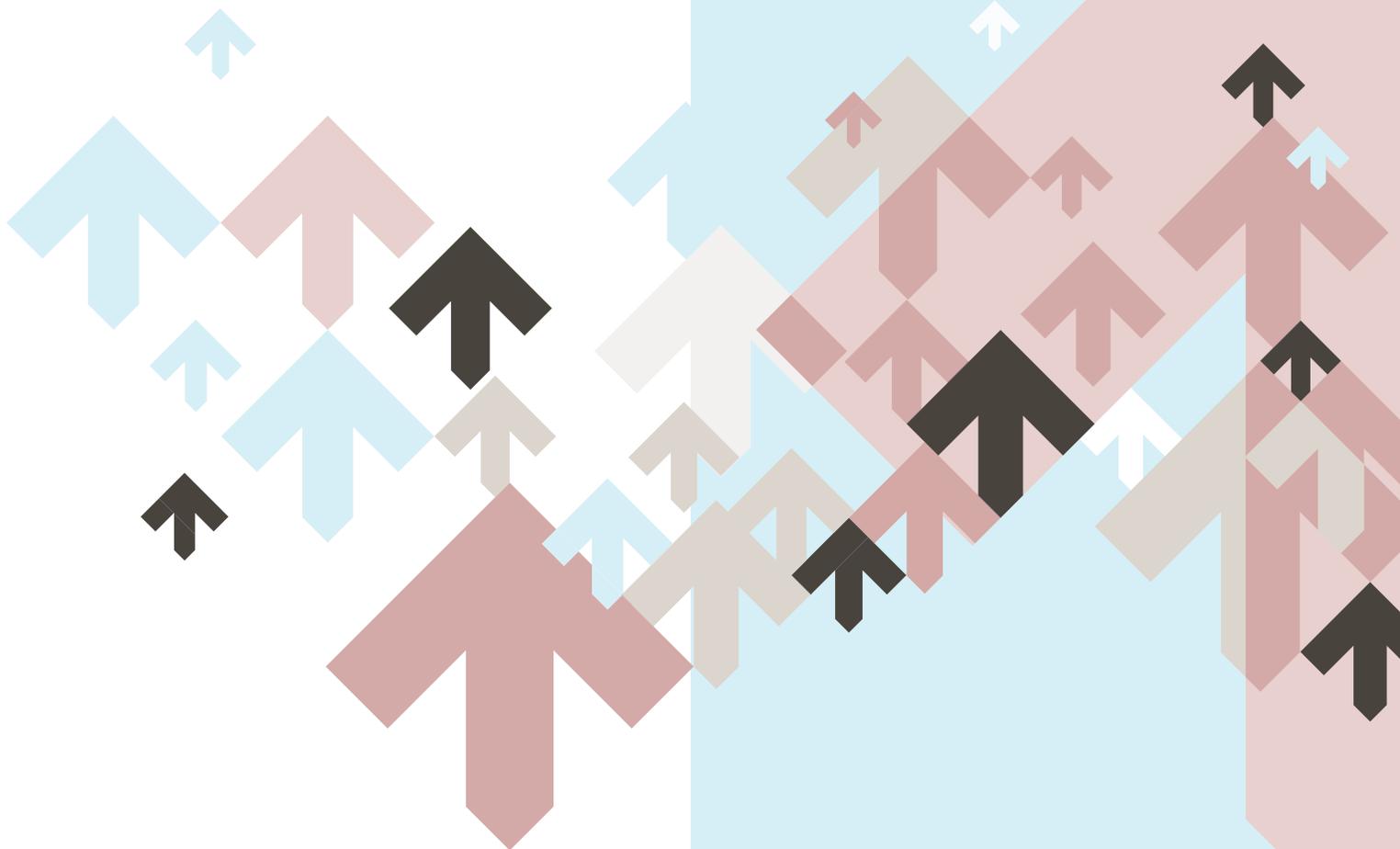
other points of view and experience into the room. The only way I think you do that is by ensuring that you have a diverse team.

What are you most looking forward to in 2023, both personally and professionally?

I feel so lucky and blessed with the rebound in 2022, coming out of the last few years of craziness. That gets me really excited and motivated for the future. Personally, I'm really looking forward to finding some balance, because that rebound was big.

Professionally, we're embarking on one of the largest transformations for our digital experience and our digital store. We're on the last year of a multiyear journey of reimagining and reinventing our digital store. It's highly challenging, it's complicated, but it's going to really help our teams envision guest experiences of the future and really reimagine the ways that we're working, as well as what we're putting into market. I'm also embracing building the next chapter of our growth story with new tools, new capabilities and new technology. It's a really important year for our team and I'm really excited.

“When you build strong relationships with your customers, you should be able to tap into insights, understand their needs, and create experiences that really serve them well and guide them on their beauty journey.”





KIMBERLEY GARDINER
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, CHIEF MARKETING
OFFICER, TRACTOR SUPPLY CO.

You've risen through the ranks of marketing departments across multiple organizations throughout your career. To what do you attribute your career growth and success?

I've always had a growth mindset. I've always been somebody that's looking for the next thing, the next challenge. I'm not afraid of making change happen. In fact, I've often been called a change agent. I often come into an organization or a group or a team and look at what can be done differently. I welcome that in terms of a new challenge and try to figure out how I can make an impact with the business and team very quickly.

I also really appreciate getting to know a team, getting to know leadership, getting to know a new organization, and figuring out how I can make things a little better. That's served me well in terms of different roles that I've had across different industries, different companies over many years. The bottom line is I love change and I like to do things a bit differently. It's served me quite well in my career.

You joined Tractor Supply in the summer of 2022. What excited you about the opportunity and how has your career experience prepared you for this new role?

When I got the call from a recruiter about the opportunity, I'd never been to a Tractor Supply store. I didn't know much about the business. I had the opportunity through the recruiting process to get to know our CEO, Hal Lawton. He met me at a store, and walking through that store with him, watching him ask customers if they needed anything, interacting with the team members throughout the entire walk around the store, I was so impressed. I've never in my career seen a CEO that truly adopts such servant leadership that interacts with team members at every level with such warmth and sincerity — that literally will help a customer pick up feed, pack it into the back of their car, and take their cart back into the store.

I thought, "If this is any reflection of the organization, then Tractor Supply is clearly a brand that I can see myself at." Talk about a humble and exciting experience from the get-go. The culture here is so unique, so different and so special. As a new person to an organization, you always want to feel welcomed. You want to understand how you can bring incremental value. What I said earlier about being a change agent and having a growth mindset — those

things are all welcome at Tractor Supply. You're able to apply the best of who you are to your work every single day. In a culture that's so supportive, so friendly, so down to earth, and the people here are so smart, it really allows you to succeed from the get-go.

Coming from a different industry, into retail from automotive after two decades, I get the question: Why did I make that move? And how have I been prepared? The language might be different. I'm not talking horsepower and torque and things like that any longer. But I'm definitely prepared in terms of how consumers interact with retailers, how brands can stand out, how marketing can really help drive business growth. Most importantly, I think about how you evolve a brand over time to not only be known for what it sells, but what it is. That's the fantastic opportunity that I've been able to figure out with Tractor Supply from day one. This brand is so beloved and so well known. As a retailer, that's something that's really special and very unique, and marketing can help tell that story. I'm excited for what I can do personally to help the organization continue to grow.

How has the role of the marketer evolved? What are you doing at Tractor Supply to help ensure that you're preparing the brand to succeed in this new environment where the connection with the customer is so critical?

I like to say that everything in marketing has changed. And not only just in the last few years, as it's changed for everyone, but every year. If you're somebody who likes to connect with customers, you can be very empathetic in terms of what customers are going through, what their needs are, what their wants are. That makes you a good candidate to be a marketer over time. It's about how a marketer understands the dynamics of the marketplace itself. What are the drivers of growth? How do we show up, be different, be helpful, and be great storytellers? Now at the same time, we talk a lot about the evolution of marketing as not just being a creator of advertising messages and driving traffic. We have to stay in front of a consumer and really be top of mind, and that's tough in an age when we have more competition than ever.

Customers have more choices than ever. Attention spans are shorter than ever and we have to fight for that real estate in people's hearts and minds. And we have to be able to do that over the long term. It requires people that are flexible in their thinking and are dynamic in how they think about a changing marketplace. They like change. I think that's really a given in today's climate. And I think ultimately in terms of retail marketing specifically, how do you pay attention to the cues that customers give you. In good times and in not so good times, where do you need to be to make sure that you make the experience with your brand easy? How do we make it seamless? And how does marketing play a role in learning about the brand, shopping with the brand, going to the store, going online — however you're going to procure that product or service so that it remains something in your heart and mind. That's a positive experience and a great message, and something hopefully that you'll share with others.

What qualities do you look for in a team, both from existing employees and future hires to help them raise their level of performance?

One of my favorite things about growing up in marketing and gradually getting into bigger and bigger roles over time is the ability to come in and build a team. The team here at Tractor Supply is amazing, but I feel what was maybe missing was that sense of curiosity and that spark. As a leader coming in, there's always going to be uncertainty. You're always going to have a bit of that, "OK, how does she work and what are the expectations and the things that I look for?" I told them this from week one: I can teach you a lot about marketing. I can help you with those basics. I can help you understand how to be a more dynamic thinker, somebody that's more attuned to behavioral science and how people's brains work and how they make decisions, which is a huge part of what marketing is all about.

As we persuade and convince others to look at our brand and product in a different way, I need you to be curious and I need you to think about how you learn something new. Maybe not every day, but certainly every week. And I help them get there. We have learning sessions every other week. We bring in guest speakers — we just did one about the importance of content, especially in a retail environment, and creating really compelling content that moves the needle with consumers and helps them have a better experience. Again, on the technical side I think we can teach our teams a lot. But when it comes to grit and tenacity, and most importantly that learning mindset, I think that's so key. Not only to teams in general, but particularly to marketing and retail as the dynamics of the market keep changing. If you don't stay a little bit ahead of it and you aren't curious about what's around the corner, I think it's going to be tough. I think you've got to roll with the punches and you have to be able to understand the rollercoaster that our customers are on.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I used to think being a great leader was the ability to command the room. How do you stand up in front of the room and really command that presence and be the expert in everything? People look to you for all the answers. I've evolved over time to think about leadership as, "How do I get the most out of every single person in the room on my team, maybe even in the building?" A great leader is somebody that listens, somebody who creates a great environment for people to feel comfortable chiming in, speaking up, sharing their ideas.

I see every person — and I have about a hundred or so people on my team — as an individual. I take the time to do one-on-ones with them. I'm doing that right now with them as I get to know who they are, what they care about, and what they hope to achieve and how I can help them. I think that's super important for a great leader. You need to know your people. You need to understand where they're coming from and ultimately how do you set a clear vision and a strategy in a way forward that they feel like they have a stake in. I can create all the great plans in the world and I can make the company successful year-over-year and do my part with marketing, but it feels so much more meaningful to a leader if you have others alongside you and they feel like they're a part of it.

I did that with this role at Tractor Supply, every day learning a little bit more, especially in my first 90 or so days, with my leadership team and across every single person in the organization. I said, "I don't care what title you have, I don't care which department you're in, I see you as an individual. I want you to participate. I want your ideas and I want you to feel like this vision that we have together is as much yours as it is mine." I think that makes for a good leader.

With hybrid, working remote, working in the office ... there's so many differences in terms of how people learn, how they engage, and how they get fulfillment out of work. The very definition of work has changed. So how do we as leaders create the right environment for people to really feel like they matter and they can succeed? And that's an individual thing as much as a company thing. That's really what helps make teams more successful as a group — we work together and we have one common goal and vision, but individually you feel like you can be present and show up as yourself. That sense of belonging that's so important is recognized for who you are and how you can bring out the best in your own performance.



“I often come into an organization or a group or a team and look at what can be done differently.”



BIANCA GATES
CEO AND CO-FOUNDER, BIRDIES

What was your journey to founding Birdies?

I have no background in retail, product or manufacturing. But I have an extremely large passion for home entertaining, cultivating conversations and community within my home. However, throughout my career journey, whenever I was hosting events in my home, I was always barefoot, in socks or had a pair of frumpy pajama slippers to entertain in. I thought, “This is silly!” As I got older and began inviting more and more amazing women to my home, I thought there had to be a better solution for at-home entertaining shoes. The seed was planted in my head. I wanted somebody else to solve the problem so I could continue with my media sales career. Unfortunately, nobody had the foresight to solve this problem. So about eight years ago, I tapped my best friend and co-founder, Marissa Sharkey, and said, “I don’t think anyone’s going to solve this problem. I think it’s going to have to be us, despite having no background in retail or in production. We have the vision. We have passion. We can do it.”

You’ve said when it comes to running a successful business, mentorship and community are key.

Can you elaborate?

My mom was a stay-at-home mother and an amazing mom, and my dad was a teacher and professor. I didn’t really grow up in an environment where business was at the forefront of conversation in my home. So when I began my professional career, I was always very dependent on others for mentorship and educating me in the professional world. As I got older, however, I began to realize the importance of peer-to-peer networking. I love identifying like-minded individuals who have the same vision and goals as I do, and connecting with them and having conversations around our passion and our vision and using that collective wisdom to get to our goals. I’ve been very fortunate because I’ve been able to put together small communities of women who share similar professional dreams. They have mentored me and inspired me to not only start Birdies while I was at Facebook, but ultimately make the decision to leave my full-time job and make my side hustle my full-time job and grow and expand Birdies.

You’re a first-generation American, and a Latina.

How has your background contributed to your professional success?

Growing up as a daughter of two immigrants from Latin America, I was challenged to try to assimilate culturally within the United States from early on. Being a Latina in a predominantly Spanish-speaking home in the 1980s was sort of survival of the fittest. We weren’t the cool girls. People weren’t curious about our background or our language or anything about us. Because of those challenges and social pressures, I had to fight hard to assimilate into society. While that was a struggle growing up, it gave me that extreme desire to create a broader community of fitting in and being accepted. This is part of the reason why Birdies is so successful, I believe. Nobody cares more than I do about creating a community around something that people love and that ultimately makes their day better. So, being the daughter of immigrants and being Latina has made being an entrepreneur easier, better and, quite frankly, more fun.

One of Birdies’ missions is to lift all women up. Why did you decide to focus on this mission?

Our mission is very near and dear to my heart. I grew up not feeling accepted in society. So for me, it breaks my heart knowing that any woman still feels the way I did growing up. Even though we’re in the business of selling shoes, the greater purpose and the greater mission of our company is to lift up all women, help them feel their best, look their best, and give them the confidence to break through any challenges in front of them. Everything we do at Birdies is inspired by our mission of



lifting up women, whether it's the investments we make, products we make, partnerships we form, or sponsorships we create. They're all aligned with the purpose of lifting up women.

Lifting women up led the brand to sponsor a women's soccer team, the Los Angeles-based Angel City Football Club. Why?

Birdies is a very proud sponsor of Angel City Los Angeles. In 2020, during the throes of COVID-19, I got a call from Julie Irman, the president of Angel City. She shared her vision of establishing a new women's soccer team in Los Angeles. She had a greater vision than just a soccer team; she wanted to inspire and entertain the next generation of women. I thought, "This is fascinating. I want to be a part of this. This is so mission-aligned with what we're doing at Birdies." However, we're a shoe company, not an athletic shoe company. So it seemed quite odd to sponsor the team. On the other hand, just using our missions as our guide, I thought, "There's no better opportunity than to partner with somebody who has such a strong vision of lifting up women." There's a lot that we do to inspire women, encourage women, cheer women on and mentor women. But at the end of the day they also need sponsorship dollars. And that's where I thought we could really help Julie and Natalie Portman's vision of Angel City by writing a check and investing in the team so that these women could have livable salaries — equal salaries to their male counterparts — and to deliver on something so great that we as a society can benefit from, which is soccer and entertainment.

How would you describe your leadership style and how do you motivate and inspire your team?

I lead by inspiring, setting the vision, anchoring us in our mission and working with our team to execute. We're also a culture of testing and learning. We try not to overthink our decisions and let our customers and our community be our guide.

What are you most looking forward to in 2023?

2023 for me is the year of creativity. We're done with the supply chain challenges, hopefully. Now we're on the road to discovery, creativity, optimism and opportunity. A lot of what you're going to see from us at Birdies this year are really embellished shoes, fashion-forward shoes, high-fashion shoes that inspire women to go out there and be their best authentic self.

Any personal goals?

Personally, I have a goal of getting more sleep this year, which goes back to unlocking more creativity. Having better sleep leads to a better mind and unlocks more creativity. I also want to travel more. I want to get out there and meet with more people, explore the world and be inspired by everything around me.





CAROL GLASER

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CHIEF MERCHANDISING OFFICER, BOB'S DISCOUNT FURNITURE

You've been in the furniture and home decor category for most of your career. What do you enjoy most about working in this space?

It's really personal. Every single day I get invited into someone's home, whether it's to change over their room, help furnish their dining area, offer them space-saving solutions, or just change their color decor. And to me, helping an individual turn the place they live into the home that they love is an exciting experience. It really motivates me.

You've been with Bob's for nearly 15 years, starting as the divisional merchandise manager to your current role as chief merchandising officer and executive vice president. What has made you want to remain and grow at the company?

The thing about Bob's is it's the people that make the company. It's the business model and the fact that we're in growth mode. I'm passionate about all three. To me it's the perfect trifecta — working with great people who are knowledgeable. They work hard, they're not afraid to make mistakes, and we're all moving in the same direction trying to build this company. It's just perfect. And then the business model is so simple. We offer quality, stylish, value-priced furniture available immediately for delivery every single day of the week. There's no gimmicks. We don't go on sale. We offer value every day.

When a customer comes into our store, they're assured they're getting the very best price and the most pieces of furniture that they can. It's a business model that you can totally rally behind.

And then there's the growth. Since I've been here, we've grown this company by seven times. We have 164 stores, we're in 24 states, we have five warehouses, and we continue to march across the country bringing our value proposition to as many states as possible. It's so good it's practically a public service.

When you joined the organization 15 years ago, did you foresee the tenure that you were going to have?

It's funny. I interviewed. I didn't even want the job, but they hired me. I need to like who I'm working for, and I interviewed with Michael Hoffman and Ted English, who used to be the former CEO of T.J.Maxx. And I just fell in love with these guys. At the end of the day, I'm going to work hard for you, but I really have to like who I'm working for. And I did.

I considered coming and I'm here. I saw the growth opportunity. I saw it then in the industry because prior to joining Bob's I was with Levitz. It filed bankruptcy and it no longer exists. I saw the opportunity coming to Bob's and it's been just a heck of a ride since I arrived here.

Thinking about your current role as the chief merchandising officer, how has it evolved over the years?

The merchant's role has always been to identify and bring great products to market for our customers. And that continues to be important. That's our goal. Our focus has always been on brick-and-mortar — how the product looks, how it feels to a customer, how they can interact with it. We have a lot of stores, so that continues to be vital. But what's changed is we need to be concerned with how the customer wants to interact with our products. And they might not want to come into a store. We need to make sure that when they interact with the brand, it's seamless across all channels. So when they're online, their experience is the same experience that they have in the store. Creating channel assortments and making sure that not only is the experience seamless, but it's also exceptional.

Retail's tough. You need to create that omnichannel experience for the customer. That's paramount at this time. But the other thing that we need to do — and our job has changed a lot — is we have to make sure that our vision for those products in-store is the same vision and is displayed the same way online, highlighting the features and benefits of the product. We work very closely with e-commerce now when we buy products. There's a different level of work and detail involved because it's important that the customer has the same experience.

Research in the furniture space starts online. We have to make sure that there's no disconnect between what they see online and what they see when they come into the store. We have to spend a lot of time making sure that that happens.

What do you think are the opportunities where Bob's can grow market share in 2023?

Since I've been here, every year we've opened stores. In 2023, we're going to continue to open stores. Probably six to 10 [stores] this year. We're also focused on our website. We're working on a website refresh right now and relaunching our website. We want to improve the aesthetic of the website, the experience — make sure that online furniture shopping is just an exceptional experience that's easy. You want to be the easy button for furniture. Those are the two big initiatives we have this year that are going to help drive the business. And then the other thing is being the everyday low price retailer. Everyone is anticipating macroeconomic headwinds and our business model plays really well in that environment.

Personally, what are the opportunities to grow as a professional and as a leader in 2023?

In 2022, I was asked to be the executive sponsor for our internal women's business resource group. The more I get involved in that, the more gratifying it is. It's a group of women and they're allies. We certainly welcome men. It's a

bit of a social network. I'm able to meet a lot of other women across the organization which I might not have been able to do. We help them with professional development and raise awareness about issues relating to women. It's really a great resource for women because as you know — and particularly in the furniture industry — we're underrepresented. I'm probably the only female chief merchant in the industry. Just think about that for a minute.

I want to get more involved with the women's business resource group in 2023. I want to help other women find their voice, because once they find it, I want to help them use it. I have four daughters and they're in the workforce. And yes, I'm a role model to them, but it's really important for me to have them see how I can impact other women — how they can come to my office and see more women in leadership roles. If I can help make that happen, wow.

What qualities, traits, characteristics do you try to espouse on a daily basis to be an effective leader?

There's all those textbook answers about what being a great leader is. For me, it's most important to be authentic. It's OK to tell them you made a mistake. They need to see that you're vulnerable, you're not superwoman and that you're real. I try to be authentic with them. I try to lead with clarity and purpose, understand where we're going as a company, overcommunicate, but always be compassionate.

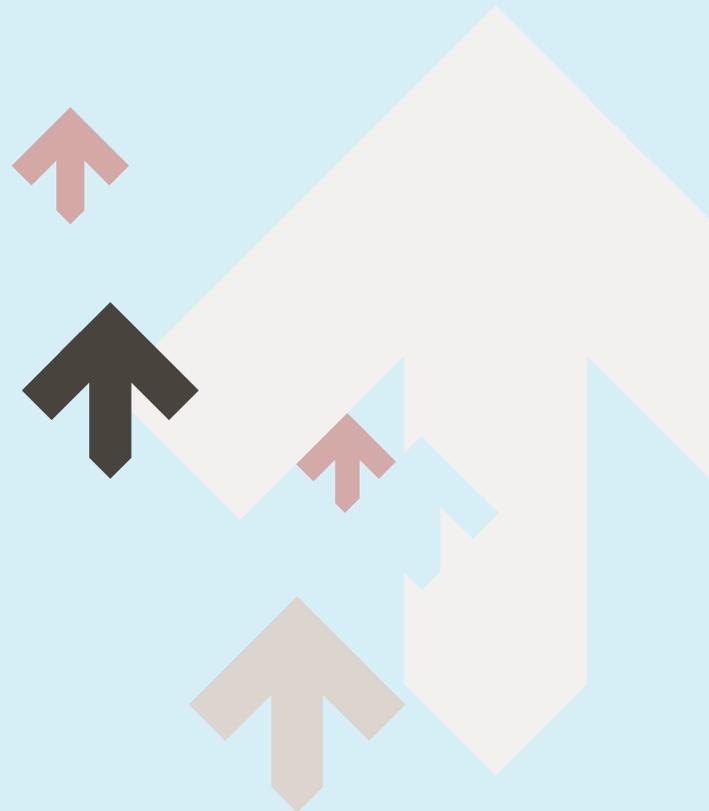
The other thing that I try to do is really get to know everyone on my team individually and find out what motivates them. Once you unlock that, you find out what makes them want to jump out of bed and come into work every day and fight the good fight. When you can do that and bottle it, you can make them move mountains for you and help them move mountains. To me that's the secret sauce.

Has your perspective as a leader changed as we've morphed into this hybrid work environment?

My principles haven't changed. It's just a little more difficult. It's hard when everyone's not in the office because being a merchant, there's a lot of collaboration that goes on as a team. We need to be together. And I get that everybody doesn't want to come into the office, but you need to be together. You need to look at samples. The challenge I have when we're not together is that I can't gauge people's body language on a Zoom call. And I pay a lot of attention to that because I like to stay in tune with the way people feel and how they're thinking about things. You can get that when you're together. You can see how they're moving, but you can't get it online. That's a challenge for me because I can't gauge if someone's happy or not. That to me is a big issue that I'm trying to figure out how to overcome.

I think I have a strong EQ. I can tell if somebody's in a meeting and they're annoyed. I can then pick them up afterwards and resolve that issue. But I can't if we all Zoom out and I didn't know.

“There’s all those textbook answers about what being a great leader is. For me, it’s most important to be authentic. It’s OK to tell them you made a mistake.”





MAUREEN KELLY
FOUNDER AND CEO, TARTE COSMETICS

Tell us about your journey to founding Tarte. You were going to be a clinical psychologist, but dropped out of your PhD program to create your own makeup line. Why the switch?

I started Tarte 23, almost 24 years ago to help empower women. I started it in my one-bedroom, rent-controlled apartment in New York City. I really wanted a line of high-performance, natural, mostly vegan, and, of course, cruelty-free makeup products. I really wanted women and people to rethink natural. I wanted them to not have to choose between makeup that was good for them and makeup that looked beautiful and lasted all day.

Tarte is now one of the fastest-growing cosmetics companies in the U.S. To what do you attribute the brand's success?

I attribute much of Tarte's success to the people behind it. All of my amazing teammates and employees, they have definitely grown Tarte to be what it is today. So many people say to me, "You're so amazing. You know, Tarte is such a reflection of you." And I definitely appreciate it. But I feel like Tarte is really a reflection of everybody that works here and everyone that has helped build it brick by brick.

We also don't operate like a big brand startup. We don't have that mentality. We act fast, we stay nimble. We're a very social-first brand. I like to be first to jump on trends whenever I can. And it's really important to me to always be a part of the conversation. For example, I started my own TikTok this past summer so I could interact with our followers, that new younger generation. At first it was a little daunting, starting a TikTok at my age. But day by day it's gotten easier and it's really fun interacting with them.

Tarte is very mission oriented and dedicated to a number of causes. Why is that?

It's been very important to me since day one to give back at Tarte. It's a huge part of my DNA as a person and therefore Tarte's DNA. I had a chief financial officer in the early days say to me, "We're not making any money and we can't afford to give back." And I said, "We might not be making money, but we certainly have more money than other people and we can't afford not to give back." So in the early days we gave products — we gave brow pencils to women that were struggling with cancer. We gave other makeup products to women's shelters. Fast-forward years later when

we could afford to give financial resources — we have given to so many different things, including hurricane relief. I live in the Florida Keys and we've had a couple of tough hurricanes come through.

My proudest accomplishment at Tarte is being the president and founder of our not-for-profit, Heart to Tarte. The latest and greatest, and the one that has been dear to my heart for the past few years, is helping teachers. We have a pandemic in this country where teachers are spending so much money every single year when — let's be honest — they don't make enough money to be outfitting their classrooms because kids are not getting notebooks, they're not getting pens and pencils and supplies that they need just for basic learning.

I have so many things that make me so happy; giving back is the thing that makes me the happiest. We have our Shape Your Future small business awards — we've given over \$150,000 to entrepreneurs that are trying to grow their businesses. When I was growing I had someone lift me up and give me a hand. Now we have Tarte University, where we have freshmen and sophomores and juniors and seniors who jump on Zoom calls with all of the people in our organization that are helping them with LinkedIn skills, telling them how they got their jobs at Tarte, teaching them coping skills for college, and things like that.

How would you describe your leadership style, and how do you motivate and inspire your team?

For me, it's really important to lead by example. I always try my best to lead with kindness and gratitude, and I look for those values in the people that I hire. I do have a really strong team in place.

Even after 23, almost 24 years, I'm still very, very involved in the day-to-day, just as involved as I was in the beginning, from driving product development innovations, which is one of my favorite things to do, to creating very disruptive marketing initiatives.

Lifting others up starts at Tarte headquarters. Home is where the Tarte is. That's what we always say. Celebrating my team's wins is a really big thing because everyone works really hard. If you don't celebrate the wins, it goes by too quickly, right? We're all overwhelmed day-to-day and you have to celebrate the wins. We do in-person Zoom calls and fun events just dedicated to lifting up our teams and trying to celebrate the wins and focus on them so that they don't go by.

You have an all-female leadership team at Tarte. What advice do you share with them?

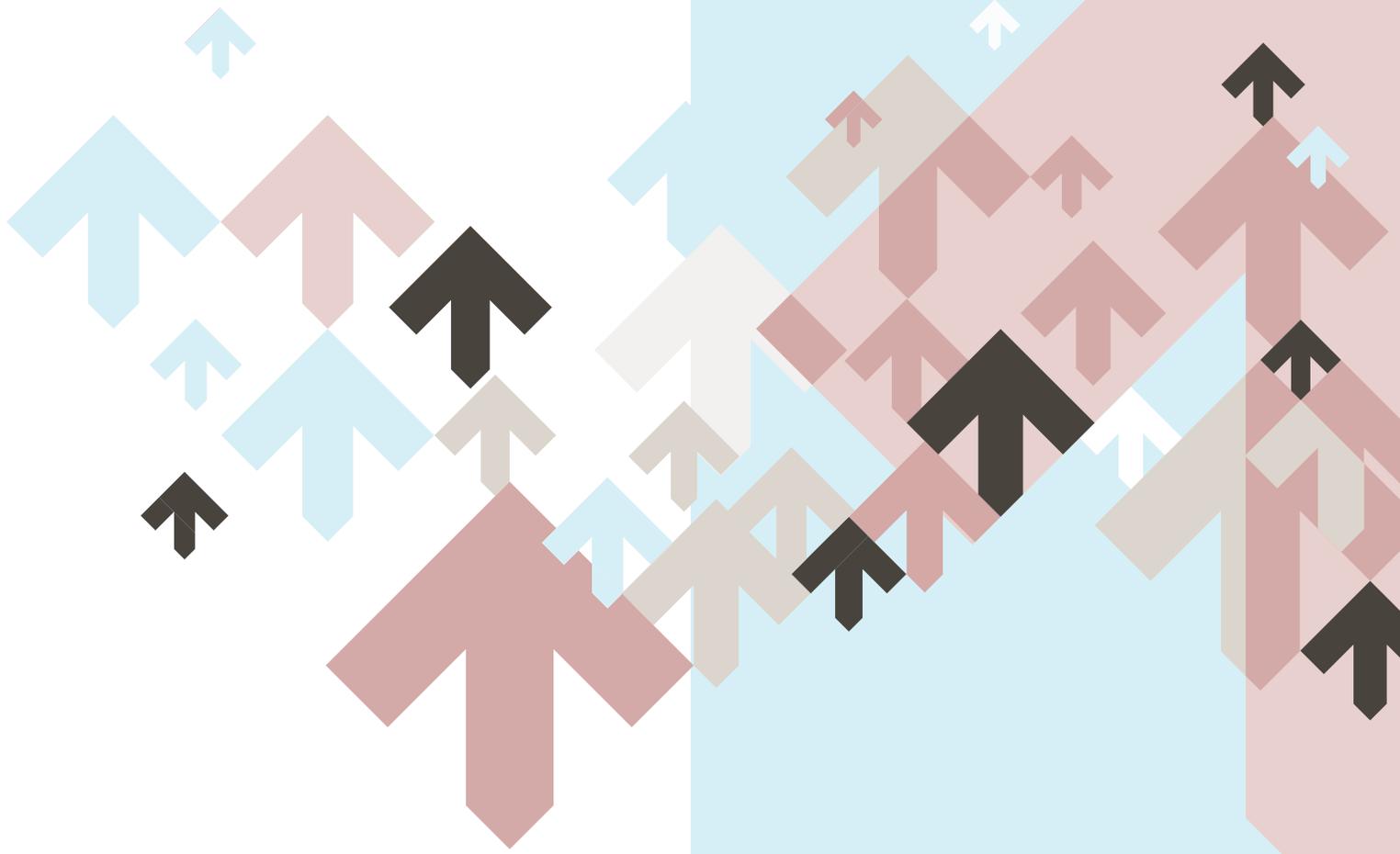
I'm very proud to have an all-female C-suite at Tarte. That's extremely unusual in the cosmetic industry and in general. I always tell them to ignore imposter syndrome. I think that's something that's very common and a very tough challenge for women. I encourage them to keep challenging me because I never want people just saying "Yes, yes, yes" to me. That's how we will keep growing. And I always encourage my female C-suite to have a big ego, right? Because if they don't have a big ego and they don't think big, then we're not going to get bigger

and grow. I feel like men have big egos, so why shouldn't women? I always tell my all-female C-suite to, of course, be humble and respectful because they're amazing, but also to think big and to have a big ego. Having a big ego is never a bad thing. And if you think big, we're going to grow and we're going to be bigger.

What are you most looking forward to in 2023, both personally and professionally?

I'm most looking forward to continuing to learn and evolve personally and professionally. I'm always looking forward to giving back and lifting up other women because that's my North Star. And I'm looking forward to a radiant addition to our biggest franchise. You heard it here! That's a little nugget that I just may have dropped. I can't say any more than that.

“It’s been very important to me since day one to give back at Tarte. It’s a huge part of my DNA as a person and therefore Tarte’s DNA.”





COURTNEY KISSLER
**SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, ZULILY**

You've worked at large global organizations such as Nike, Starbucks, Nordstrom, and you're now approaching two years at Zulily. Tell us about your career experience and how it's helped prepare you for your current role.

I really started my technology journey at startups, and I'll connect why that matters with my current role. From there, yes, I went to Nordstrom, spent 14 years there, learned a lot, and then joined Starbucks and then Nike. A lot of the experiences I've had led me to having a balanced understanding of what it's like to be in a company the size of Zulily. In startups, you know innovation, growth, experimentation, test-and-learn. At bigger companies, you're navigating a lot of dynamics and learning a lot about what that looks like. At Zulily it's kind of a mix of both. I feel like my experience across both of those environments set me up for the role here.

Women have traditionally been underrepresented in technology. What challenges have you had in this industry?

We're all focused on continuously striving for inclusion, belonging and diversity across our organization. My career in technology started in college when I switched majors. There were very few women. I was one of two that graduated in the class that I was in for computer science. So I learned how to be very focused on creating the right environment even before I moved into leadership as a peer, as an engineer. How do I continue to bring more diversity into the teams that I'm a part of? Practice inclusivity, make sure that I'm asking for feedback and input across varying perspectives. I think the learning for me was to be clear about what you want and where you want to go. Be intentional.

It's OK to say, "I want to go this route and own your destiny." There were times in my career where I sat back and waited for things to come to me. I've been fortunate to express where I want to go and have mentors along the way. People have invested in me and helped me be successful. So how do I pay that forward? How do I continue to strive for that in the organizations that I'm a part of and, frankly, the broader technology community?

What advice do you have for the next generation of women leaders?

For starters, it's OK to not know exactly what you want to do when you're still in middle school, high school, or even early stages of college. The things that I look for and value are

learning agility, problem solving, being able to understand how to look at a problem and decompose it in a way where you can actually problem solve against it. So even if you're not sure, I think the curiosity that comes from just understanding what this career might look like for you and figuring out how to engage in some community to learn. And then for leaders like myself, we also need to show up in those environments and make sure we're available for mentorship.

And also sharing the challenges. It's easy to talk about how great it is, but there are challenges. There are ways to learn. Find your voice. How do you make sure that you're able to speak up and gain that confidence is something that I believe is an important investment for us all to make. Figuring out how we show up and give people a path that they can see. Sometimes it will feel like it's not achievable and it really is. You just have to figure out how to surround yourself with people who can help along the way.

What technology trends do you believe will have an outsized impact on the industry?

One of the things that drew me to Zulily is we treat our supply chain as a competitive advantage. We actually own our technology in that space. As someone who has been in retail a long time, I believe many organizations focus on optimizing the front-end experience for their customers, and supply chain and fulfillment sometimes gets left behind. What I love about our model is we're focused on optimizing for what we call pack factor, which is consolidation logic, and really making sure that we can put as much in a box before we ship it out of our fulfillment center.

That's all logic and strategy that we've owned really since the beginning of Zulily. Why I believe that this is a trend and an important one is the connection to being more eco-friendly and sustainable. We already have [sustainability] goals and targets that we've set and are committed to meeting. I believe because we've focused on that as a strategic advantage, we're positioned well to meet those goals.

What type of legacy do you hope to have? How do you want to be remembered by those that you've led?

I'm a big believer in taking care of people and the team first. I truly believe that when you take care of your team and create an environment where you know people can do their best work, you end up delivering against the business outcomes. I always want to be remembered as a leader who was connected to the team in a meaningful way. Not just in words, but in actions. Can people come to me? I talk about honoring reality and if my team isn't willing to bring me reality, then I'm not creating an environment where people can speak up. It's extremely important to me and I want people to remember me for creating that environment for them so they can grow and be successful. In turn, I strongly believe that that leads to business results and competitive advantage.

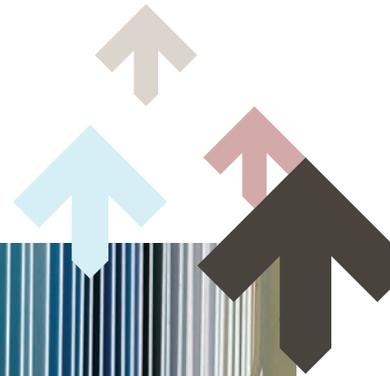
Have you found that being a leader in the last couple of years has become more challenging?

I think the principles remain intact. Engagement matters. Understanding the health of engagement is even more amplified in the current state. And knowing what motivates

and keeps your team engaged; it's not one size fits all. That's what a lot of us are learning — you really need to be connected in a meaningful way to each and every one of your team members. Now at scale, that means you hire great leaders who are doing that and then you understand it.

One thing that I believe in and we practice at Zulily is having engagement. Everybody does engagement surveys. That's not uncommon. We do a more frequent pulse check. We do something called employee net promoter score so we can understand the health of the environment on a more frequent basis. It's super simple: Would you refer a friend or colleague to your team or to Zulily at large? That tells us a lot about what's working. We learn a lot about bright spots and where we might learn from certain teams that are feeling very engaged and where we might have opportunities to do something different. I think it starts with that. It starts with connecting in a meaningful way with each and every person on your team.

“How do I continue to bring more diversity into the teams that I’m a part of? Practice inclusivity, make sure that I’m asking for feedback and input across varying perspectives.”





AIMÉE LAPIC
CEO, HANNA ANDERSSON

You joined Hanna Andersson last July as CEO. Why did you decide to move to this company and what are you most excited about in your role?

I joined Hanna Andersson because I love the brand. I used to buy Hanna Andersson clothing for my kids when they were little, so when they called and asked me if I would be interested in the opportunity, I had an immediate feeling of joy associated with thoughts of early Christmas mornings when my kids would wear their holiday Hannas. It's also a premium children's wear brand known for organic, sustainable quality well before it was in vogue.

But I'm not the only person who loves the brand; Hanna Andersson is beloved by so many people. In fact, our Net Promoter Score is well above 76 percent, which is unheard of in the kid's and baby apparel space. Our brand awareness is really low, however, and that was another reason I was excited to join the company. I know I can help drive brand reach and create brand awareness. I'm so excited to take my expertise within the digital arena and bring it to this 100 percent direct-to-consumer company that has done such a great job of growing. Now it's ready for the next level of growth and capabilities.

What are your top three goals or priorities for the company?

My No. 1 goal for Hanna Andersson is to increase brand reach. It's a beloved brand. Now we just need more people to know about that. My No. 2 goal is to help craft the sustainable, durable, high-quality premium message around all Hanna Andersson clothing. And my third goal is to double or triple our size. I want us to be well known in the U.S. as well as outside of the U.S.

Prior to this role, you were the chief digital and marketing officer at GoPro, where, under your leadership, GoPro's direct-to-consumer business established itself as a key contributor to both top-line and bottom-line performance. You've also proven yourself to be a highly skilled leader with a track record of driving results at iconic brands. What are your secrets to success?

My No. 1 secret to success is having a phenomenal team — whether I'm hiring people who are better at certain capabilities than I am or recruiting people who have a phenomenal growth mindset and a positive attitude. I absolutely believe in surrounding myself with a super strong team. My No. 2 key to success is figuring out how to empower people so they can be their best selves at work, either by helping them remove obstacles, lean in when they need support, or let them do their jobs that they do so well. My third key to success is to focus on what the customer experience is from every customer touchpoint. I really look at things from a customer lens first, because if we can wow our customers, if we can delight them, if we can drive their loyalty, everything else will solve itself.

You're known for being a generous and supportive leader. What are some of the ways you motivate and inspire your team?

I inspire my team by setting really clear objectives. I understand that it can get noisy, especially if you're managing a large team. You can get pulled in a lot of directions and have a lot of competing priorities. So, I start with very clear objectives and then ruthless prioritization so that I'm not asking people to do two things that are in tension with each other. That's really important to me. I also try to meet my team where they are. Some people need more help and guidance. Others need empowerment and help in terms of more resources or removing barriers. I change my leadership style to what they need at the time. And it's important that I build a team where we all work together as one. I truly believe that we're in it together. We're one team and we will succeed or fail together.

You're a mother of three. How do you balance your work and home life and recharge?

Any working mom or working parent out there knows that you can't do everything perfectly at any one given time. When





thinking about how I manage my kids and my family life with my job, I think about each day as a different day. On any given day, I may make a completely different set of decisions or have different priorities than another day. Some days, for example, I need to be more of a mom. I need to pick up my son from school early, or take him to a soccer game, or weigh in on something that's happening with my daughter and I need to leave work early.

On other days, I need to be more of a CEO. Today, for example, I had to present to our board, which was very exciting and thrilling, but I couldn't answer the phone when my son called in the middle of the meeting. So there are moments where you have to make those trade-offs and it happens every single day.

Another thing to keep in mind is you have to be kind to yourself because at any given point you're going to feel like you're not doing a great job in either your family life, your personal life, or as a friend. It's super important to be kind to yourself, forgive yourself, and give yourself permission to recharge. In fact, recharging is a really important part of being a parent and a working mom. I recharge by working out. I start every morning with a workout. Some of these workouts are super early in the morning, but I take that time to recharge.



I also try to spend time reflecting at the end of every week. So before my kids get home from school on a Friday afternoon, I spend an hour or so reflecting on how it's gone and what I want to do over the weekend, either with my kids or with work the following week. And I try to have moments over the course of time where I purposely reflect and think about how I want to do things differently going forward.

What are you most looking forward to in 2023, both personally and professionally?

2022 was the biggest year of change for me personally. I got this wonderful new job as the CEO of Hanna Andersson, and I got married to a super wonderful partner. In 2023, I'm really excited to look at those changes and build on them. For example, I'm excited to continue to work on this great strategy for Hanna Andersson that we started working on this past fall. I'm also really excited to think about 2023 as a year of optimization. Same kind of thing in my marriage: We got married, that was great, we're really excited about it. But what does it mean going forward?

“I try to have moments over the course of time where I purposely reflect and think about how I want to do things differently going forward.”



SHAWN OUTLER
**CHIEF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND
INCLUSION OFFICER, MACY'S**

You were one of the first people in the retail industry to be named a chief DEI officer. Why do you think Macy's had the foresight to create the position, and what led you to take the role?

As you know, diversity, equity and inclusion is ever evolving, and we at Macy's have been on the same journey. In 2018, we officially launched our Diversity and Inclusion Center of Excellence, where we put some real teeth and rigor behind our diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts and developed a holistic strategy with clear goals and KPIs. The idea was that we could take meaningful action, improve and lead in the DEI space. I was inspired to take on the challenge. I saw it as a unique opportunity to connect and inspire our entire organization to become a best-in-class organization in the world of DEI.

And our DEI programs keep growing and evolving. Our focus in the early 2000s, for example, was on compliance and representation. Then, in 2011, we launched The Workshop at Macy's, which is a four-and-a-half-day vendor development program created to educate and prepare diverse retail vendors in the industry.

While our DEI efforts were a shining example for other companies in retail to emulate, it was also important to me that the programs we were putting in place helped Macy's become a great place to work, shop and partner with. My hope was to inspire every colleague to see themselves in our work and understand that we could be the best if we all thought, acted and operated with an understanding of our individual role in helping build our DEI vision to become a very inclusive company. I also saw this as a great opportunity to significantly shape the organization's culture and business, as well as how we show up in the world.

What are some DEI initiatives Macy's has launched that you're most proud of?

We believe every colleague has a role to play in creating an inclusive and diverse company and really advancing our strategy. Three years ago, we committed to diversifying our leadership. Our company overall is incredibly diverse, but we had an opportunity to improve diversity at the director and above level. So we built a plan. We established a goal to achieve 30 percent ethnic diversity at the director level and above. One of the tools we used to stem our mid-career attrition — which we identified as an opportunity through analysis of our data — was to launch MOSAIC, a 12-month program designed to strengthen the leadership skills for

a selected group of top-talent managers and directors of Black/African-American, Hispanic-Latinx, Native American, and Asian descent. The program is really focused on developing self-identified diverse managers and directors as top performers, and help them get ready for senior leadership roles within our organization. We also know that DEI is integral to our enterprise priorities and ethnic representation. This goal of 30 percent represents half of our culture index. It's a key metric fueling our short-term incentives.

We also see that our employee resource groups (ERGs) have become incredibly important to our organization. As you know, there's been a number of societal issues over the last few years, such as the murder of George Floyd, the rise of antisemitism, and the tragedies that took place in Buffalo and Uvalde. Our ERGs have been really important in terms of pulling employees together and hosting crucial conversations on all of these topics. They really have created an opportunity for our colleagues to share how they're feeling and how these events have impacted them, as well as learn about what's happening in society and how our colleagues are showing up every day with all of that on their mind. So creating this community for us has been incredibly important. We've started to expand all our ERGs to all of our locations.

This idea of community across our enterprise and all of our nameplates — including Macy's, Bloomingdale's — is really important to fueling and creating that connection, empathy and an allyship across our organization. We also establish an annual week of understanding where we come together to have further conversation on topics that our colleagues told us are really important to them, like mental health and wellbeing.

We've also been incredibly focused on our supply diversity, which we've been focused on for several years now. I'm really proud of the work we've done there. Our goal from that day in 2011 was to create an ecosystem by which all vendors could thrive. We also provide them with access to customers, such as through pop-up shops during the workshop or hosting those companies on our website for a month.

The last leg of this ecosystem is around access to capital. We all know that there's so many barriers to entry for these companies that are coming from underrepresented communities. We know they're underfunded and undersupported. So we launched S.P.U.R. Pathways: Shared Purpose, Unlimited Reach. I'm really excited and proud of this initiative because it's really focused on providing access to capital and mentorship to vendors that are underfunded and underrepresented. The idea is to spur growth and to meet these different vendors where they are today with different levels of capital and funding to help them grow. The goal is to grow that fund to \$200 million. Macy's has committed \$30 million to that fund, and this is where we're really taking a stand on growing our diverse businesses.

Macy's has also launched an initiative called Mission Every One. It's our commitment to use our business and brands to tackle the barriers to representation so together we can realize the potential of every one of us. One of Macy's commitments is that it will spend \$5 billion on underrepresented businesses and those that provide sustainable products. Part of what's going to fuel this initiative is the Spur Pathways Fund.

Did you have any challenges getting any of these initiatives launched?

This work overall is incredibly challenging. When you think about changing systems and processes that have been in place for years and providing equity through new ways of working every day, it's a challenge. What I've really been focused on is providing clear messaging and language that everyone across our organization can align to and see themselves being a part of. I want every colleague to understand their role and think about how they could advance this work and what it means for them.

It also means that our colleagues can show up every day and be themselves. Give them an opportunity to do that, but in line with that, really help them understand their role. Getting there and doing the work may not be as easy, but I hope we've built a plan and a strategy that everyone can get behind. I see the efforts and I see the progress that we're making, but systems change and any sort of change really takes time and you've just got to keep at it. And we've been at it for a while and I'm really proud of where we are today.

Outside of Macy's, you help people of color prepare for executive leadership roles through your nonprofit, Black Retail Action Group. Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

Ever since I was a teenager, I wanted to be a part of the retail industry. Although I worked retail jobs throughout school, I joined the corporate ranks without knowing how to navigate. In that respect the Black Retail Action Group, or BRAG, is a really personal passion because its mission is to educate and prepare professionals, entrepreneurs and students for leadership roles in the industry. I've been a longstanding board member since 2001 and co-president for the last six years. My goal with BRAG is to be an example to others who look like me so they can look forward and see someone who has navigated the industry successfully. I also help them really figure out how to chart their path in the industry.

How do you motivate and inspire your team?

I have an extremely talented team of women and men who are really subject matter experts and just motivated on their own. What we've created is a great partnership. I give them a huge challenge and ask them to go reach for the stars and come back to me with a great idea about how to get it done. I inspire them by giving them the autonomy to think and to grow, as well as really push the envelope to challenge others and themselves to think big and deliver on some outstanding programming ideas that maybe go beyond what they initially thought. But really it's about giving them a really big, bold vision to go after, and then give them the space and the autonomy to think that through and to really ideate and create.

What's next for you in your role?

As I mentioned earlier, [last year] we launched our Mission Everyone, which is Macy's bold strategy focused on social purpose. We've got some real great commitments out there. The 30 percent ethnic representation is part of that, the \$5 billion spend with underrepresented and sustainable companies and products is part of that. My mission and goal right now is to deliver on those commitments and inspire every single individual in our organization to do the same. Our goal is to really be the best. We want to lead in this space, but a huge part of that is going to be delivering on those commitments and those goals and creating a culture and environment where everyone can thrive, be their best, but also make an incredible impact in our business and organization, as well as in the communities where we operate.

“My hope was to inspire every colleague to see themselves in our work and understand that we could be the best if we all thought, acted and operated with an understanding of our individual role in helping build our DEI vision to become a very inclusive company.”





KATHY REARDON
**EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,
CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER, DOLLAR GENERAL**

You made your way from the director level to the C-suite at Dollar General. What are some key steps you took to ensure your success along the way?

My journey with Dollar General began in September 2009 when I joined as director of human resources. Like so many at DG, I'm a product of our internal development and mentorship programs and am a testament to our leadership's investment in employees. That inspires me to find opportunities for our next generation of talent.

Along with empowering its employees through a variety of developmental programs, Dollar General prioritizes fostering a diverse and inclusive environment, which is what drew me to the company. In fact, I felt this from the moment I started as I was lucky enough to have two great mentors — one in Todd Vasos, our previous CEO, and another in Bob Ravener, my boss when I joined the company. They both saw and helped me realize my potential and facilitated a variety of experiences for me at Dollar General, affording me the opportunity to learn about multiple areas of the business.

Aligned with Dollar General's ethos of providing unrivaled opportunities for motivated individuals to start or advance their careers, I was able to forge my own career path and explore my passions. For example, after several years in a corporate role, I moved into employment branding and DEI, and was responsible for supporting the company's employee resource groups (ERGs) and employment brand in the market. Shortly thereafter, I was promoted to vice president of talent management, leading our organizational development,



training and DEI efforts. When Bob Ravener announced his retirement in 2019, I was honored to be asked to fill the role of chief people officer. It's been a phenomenal 13 years.

You've been recognized as a "Workplace Culture Leader." How do you emulate that at Dollar General?

Our employees are Dollar General's biggest asset. In March 2022, we announced plans to create 10,000 new career opportunities through expected new stores, distribution centers, and the growth of our DG Private Fleet. Our new career opportunities represent an estimated 6 percent overall increase to our current workforce.

Additionally, our commitment to DEI is important. We believe that creating an inclusive environment helps people feel supported and encouraged to bring their best selves to work. Through our ERGs, we provide information and education to continually support a diverse and inclusive workspace, and we focus on supplier diversity by expanding our purchase of goods and services from vendors certified as minority and/or women owned.

Furthermore, I'm inspired by the organization's support of diverse talent, demonstrated through our sponsorship and mentorship of female leaders. I formerly served as executive sponsor of the Women's Professional Network, one of our five ERGs, and helped with the rollout of these resource groups to Dollar General's distribution centers and stores, allowing more employees to participate.

In raising the voices of our employees, we can better understand them and, as a result, better understand how to support our customers and communities.

As chief people officer, how are you ensuring that all of your employees feel they belong and are heard?

Dollar General believes that our employees benefit from open and direct communication. In addition to our formal feedback channels, including employee surveys, we encourage employees to share their thoughts openly with their supervisors. Ultimately, we strive to create a work environment that's built on trust, respect and opportunity.

A wonderful example of acting on employees' feedback and needs is the creation of our "Active Allyship" guide. The guide recognizes that a diverse and inclusive workplace results in a better experience for our employees. To us, being an ally means taking an active role and creating a safe space where every individual can be their authentic self. I'm proud to have published this set of guidelines to help employees live out one of our core values of "respecting the dignity and differences of others" to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment within their teams.

A strong workplace culture requires that each one of our employees feels wholly welcome to bring their true, authentic self to work every day. I'm proud to lead an organization that leans into that notion so heavily.

How are you approaching recruitment at Dollar General to garner the best talent?

At Dollar General, we don't just hire people — we invest in them, offering opportunities for both personal and professional growth.

Our recruitment efforts highlight robust training opportunities and benefit offerings which include our enhanced

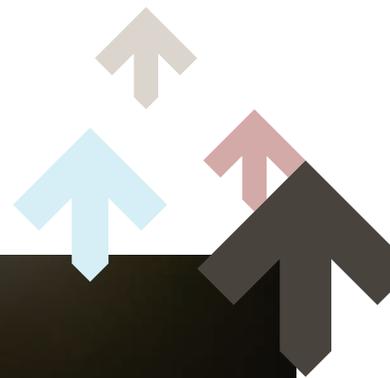
college tuition benefits, including debt-free degree and education options through Workforce Edge for employees and their families, competitive wages, as well as our driver training programs for employees who would like to become drivers in our private fleet. Take, for example, Danielle Guillory. She started her career at DG as a store manager in 2018. After receiving deliveries at her store, she knew she wanted to join the DG Private Fleet. Danielle was able to earn her CDL through our driver training program and, today, serves as a traveling fleet supervisor for the company.

By continuing to provide opportunities like these, not only are we able to advance our people's careers, but we're creating meaningful wage growth for our workforce, which positively impacts local communities and economies. As part of our commitment to serving others, we strive to take care of and show appreciation for employees, enabling them to take better care of themselves, their families, their customers and their communities.

What do you want to leave behind as a legacy?

My personal motto is "We Can Do Hard Things." I strive to support and encourage people on their personal and professional journey, and to help them identify their own strength, resilience and courage to take on life's challenges. There will always be obstacles to overcome, big or small. When I reflect on my life, if I have touched someone by helping them believe in themselves and overcome an obstacle, that gives me pride and a feeling of purpose.

“A strong workplace culture requires that each one of your employees feels wholly welcome to bring their true, authentic self to work every day.”





TRICIA SMITH
GLOBAL CEO, ANTHROPOLOGIE

You joined Anthropologie during the pandemic following a more-than-two-decade career at Nordstrom. What challenges did you face during that time of transition?

I think the biggest challenges actually created what I see now, in hindsight, as some of the greatest opportunities. With a team that had faced so much adversity and disruption, it made them just a little bit more receptive, I think, to new ideas and new ways of thinking. We had a really diverse mix of new and really long-tenured leaders. A lot of leaders had been with the company since the very beginning. So after spending 25 years myself at a company, I knew it was really important to listen to the different generations of brand leadership in order to create buy-in and sponsorship.

The first thing that we did, less than two months after we started, was organize one of the first offsites the team has had in years. Some of those leaders had never even met each other in person because they had been working remotely for so long. We spent two full days really co-authoring what would become the ethos of Anthropologie and the values of our company. And it allowed us to do two things: One was to really celebrate what was important about our brand's legacy. We were preparing to celebrate the 30-year anniversary of Anthropologie — the first store opened 30 years ago. Second was to get the team together to contemplate the expectations of today's customers and employees. I think that was important to make sure that we had co-authorship and buy-in from this diverse group of senior leaders.

You helped launch the first employee resource group (ERG) for women at Nordstrom. What's the mark of a successful ERG?

I don't even think they were called ERGs at the time. But around 2014, there was a real need to put together a leadership group at Nordstrom. At the time, I was one of the most senior leaders at the company. We recognized that there was a need to create a more supportive community that could provide resources and access for women that were facing some of the same challenges in charting their course in their professional lives and balancing their personal lives. It was very grassroots and employee led. I think ERGs need to really be focused on presenting solutions for an organization.

I work fairly closely with the ERGs at Anthropologie now as well. I met with the women's leadership group in the new year to share what my experience was [at Nordstrom] and discuss how to help support and sponsor that group.

You've said that you always knew you would have a career in retail. What excites you about the industry in 2023?

I think disruption creates opportunity. And so many retailers right now are trying to figure out what customers value most in a post-pandemic retail experience. I'm so excited to be leading a brand that places so much value on creativity and inspiration, both in the physical and the digital space. I think we've really found that the customer places tremendous value on experiences that we're able to create. It really excites me to think about how we can innovate and build on that.

Digital has become even more important as customers prioritize their time and what the physical experience needs to be. So that gave us a bit of a focus on making sure that our physical experience really met and exceeded customers' expectations and inspired them. I've found that increasingly the customer wants to feel inspired. The No. 1 value at Anthropologie is founded on creativity and I think it puts us in a place where we can really leverage that. I think it's more around engaging the community, inviting customers back in and committing ourselves to making sure that we're intentional in what that experience is like when customers come back into our stores.

What advice would you give to women in retail who want to get to the C-suite?

I always think about finding that right balance of learning and leading. I think that comes down to a few things that have worked in striking that right balance: You have to have the humility to be able to recognize what you need to learn to prepare yourself for the next role. But then you need to bring the confidence to express what your aspirations are.

Most importantly, I think you have to be able to build and trust a really empowered and strong team. Getting the right people in the right roles, surrounding yourself with a strong leadership team, and really empowering your teams to be a part of leading where you want to go as a brand is incredibly important.

I also think having an endless curiosity that can recognize the changing needs of the customer is important. That's the thing I love the most about retail — no season, no week, no day is ever the same. You have to create a culture that's really dedicated to that constant evolution and encourage a team to feel like they can recognize those changes. They can take risks and chart a new path forward.

What are you most proud of since joining the team at Anthropologie?

So many things! We have a really incredible team. Our C-suite is made up of remarkable female leaders. They all have really diverse backgrounds and experiences. One of the things I'm most proud about is that they really lead by example by trusting and leveraging those diverse skill sets. They're creating the culture to emulate that.



JANICE TENNANT
CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, MERRELL

Tell us briefly about your career journey and your role at Merrell.

I've been a career consumer marketer working on consumer-loved brands like Tropicana, Quaker Oats, Huggies, and Kleenex. I started my career at PepsiCo working in traditional brand management and from there moved into various disciplines of marketing, from new product development to equity communications.

One of the most formative parts of my career was working in shopper marketing, where I called on key accounts like Target, Walmart, and Publix. During this time, I developed a greater appreciation for the importance of marketers to understand the consumer's journey from the moment they enter a category to the moment they make a purchase. When I moved to Wolverine World Wide to take on the chief marketing officer role at CAT Footwear, this became even more critical as we had to think about our global retail footprint.

Having been at Merrell for the past two-and-a-half years, I lean on a lot of these formative experiences as we think about reimagining the future of Merrell at retail. What has changed is the importance of having an omnichannel, digital-first approach. The other element that's critical is how you're bringing the full brand to life at these consumer touchpoints, especially as it relates to your brand's driving purpose. In today's consumer landscape, you have to win them over with their hearts. There's no easy answer to this, and it's the part of my current role that I enjoy trying to figure out with the team.

When you joined Merrell in 2020, you realized the lack of representation of women in outdoors spaces. Since then, you've made it a mission to make the outdoors more inclusive for both women and people of color. What programs have you put in place to move this goal forward?

With a degree in physical health education, it has always been important to me to get more people active and outside. When people get outside, we know they're better emotionally, mentally and physically. In fact, just 15 minutes a day outside can help reduce stress and lower blood pressure. The challenge we've seen and recognize is many communities don't have access to outside spaces as there are still many barriers.

When I took on my role at Merrell in 2020, it was important to me to eliminate some of those barriers. But before we could do that, I felt it was important for our brand to

have a deeper understanding of the barriers people were facing, which led to the development of the Inclusivity in the Outdoors Report. The global report is a study of multinational perceptions of inclusivity in outdoor spaces, and why women, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+ communities feel they cannot and do not belong.

This research was one of the driving reasons behind why we launched the More Less campaign. It was a celebration of how women can leverage the outdoors to overcome physical and mental challenges, especially as more than 53 percent of women saying their stress levels are higher than they were a year ago and almost half feeling burned out.

We've even incorporated our findings into the way we think about our customer experience at Merrell retail stores and how we interact with people from these different populations to make them feel supported and encouraged when making purchases to get outside. Many people's first step before the outdoors is retail, and their experience there can impact their overall likelihood of coming back for more. Our findings will continue to help guide many of our efforts for 2023 and beyond, and we encourage anyone in our industry to go to our website and download the report. We want as many people as possible helping to solve this important social issue.

You also pushed forward an aggressive digital and direct-to-consumer strategy at Merrell, developing a strategic road map that grew the brand's e-commerce business within a year. What are your success secrets?

People begin and end their journeys with brands online. Fundamentally, this is the reason why we knew we had to change the way we approach building a modern Merrell brand.

Now, everything is digital — from how we test our products with consumers to understand their unmet needs to how we think about showcasing our products in places where they're consuming information about how to get outside, whether that be Instagram, TikTok, or review sites.

The key to doing this well is building cross-functional collaboration into each process. The digital space moves so fast that agile collaboration becomes imperative, and we're building new systems and processes to support this.

You're a founding member of the Black Executive CMO Alliance. Why did you launch this group?

I joined the Black Executive CMO Alliance because I feel strongly about paying it forward to the next generation to help increase representation at all levels of our organizations and to reflect the consumers we serve. It's also been incredibly helpful professionally to connect, learn and grow from the Black marketing C-suite executives across multiple industries who have a shared experience.

As a group, we were driven to launch this alliance as we're profoundly aware of the inequality and seeming indifference that excludes Black employees from the C-suite and leads to a lack of corporate board diversity. As members and allies, we feel an obligation to create a navigable path for Black marketers. By building a bigger, better pipeline, we will prepare more Black talent to advance in their careers and increase their value and contributions.

How would you describe your leadership style, and how do you motivate and inspire your team?

I've adopted a coaching leadership style. Growing up, I played a lot of sports, and I learned early on that when you play a sport your coach can't run your race for you, but she can give you great advice, feedback and exercises that help you grow and prepare you to perform. I take that same approach with my current teams. I spend a lot of time focused on empowering them to build and drive the best strategies, while investing time in developing their skills as marketers and as business leaders.

I've often received recognition for being a champion of innovation. I ask my team what we can do bigger, better and faster each year. This requires a deep level of curiosity and constantly studying where trends are going and how consumer behavior is shifting. The reality is if we want to lead in the marketplace, we have to have a hunger for what's next and be one step ahead with innovation.

What are you most looking forward to in 2023, both personally and professionally?

I'm looking forward to building off the momentum and brand heat Merrell had in 2022. We were recognized as the Footwear News Achievement Awards Brand of the Year for our efforts in promoting a more diverse vision of the outdoors. Yet there's so much more for us to do and we're ready to tackle it head on.

Personally, I'm excited to spend more time outdoors with my two boys traveling and exploring this upcoming summer.

“The reality is if we want to lead in the marketplace, we have to have a hunger for what’s next and be one step ahead with innovation.”





LATISHA BRANDON
VICE PRESIDENT OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION, CULTURE, AND CORPORATE GIVING, THE CONTAINER STORE

You started at The Container Store in a newly created position of senior director of DEI, and were promoted to vice president in one year. What needs were most pressing in this new position?

One of the most pressing things that I saw was figuring out a way to engage everyone in the journey. Inclusion, equity, and having a diverse workforce isn't owned solely by one person. It was really important to me to galvanize everyone in a meaningful way and show how every person has a voice and a role in the way that people feel, the culture that we have, and the way that we engage in the community.

What is one DEI initiative you spearheaded that you're proud of?

Oh my gosh. You know, The Container Store is a great organization with a great culture, so I tend to be very ambitious. I'm really appreciative to be a part of an organization that was so receptive to my level of ambition. It's hard to pick just one initiative because we've done so much in such a short amount of time!

In the last year, we've stood up an infrastructure for our DEI journey that really engages everyone in a meaningful way. We created three councils that are part of this structure:

- ◆ an executive DEI council, made up of our senior leaders;
- ◆ an advisory council, cross-functional in nature with representation from stores, the support center or home office, and our distribution facilities; and
- ◆ a supplier diversity council in charge of our efforts to build a more inclusive supply chain.

And then we also have seven employee resource and affinity groups, all grassroots led. All of the components of this support structure were stood up in less than a year.

Most of your career has been spent as a DEI practitioner. What have been the biggest challenges and how have you overcome them?

To answer that question, I want to start by how I got to this space. Human resources was not my area of focus when I started my career. But being a millennial woman of color, obviously I've experienced many of the biases and, unfortunately, some discriminatory practices that oftentimes people that are part of underrepresented populations do. There has always been this passion of mine to advocate for equities. The way that it manifested in my career was I started vol-

unteering, first with employee resource groups (ERGs) and then supporting my previous employer's DEI efforts. That ultimately led to an opportunity with a previous employer to relaunch a supplier diversity program.

What I quickly learned is that oftentimes this space is under-resourced. It's usually a team of one or two, three if you're lucky. And there's not a lot of budget that's typically allocated to it. So you have to be very creative and resourceful when it comes to driving the strategy. The way that I've learned to mitigate some of those challenges is through engagement. If you're someone who is of an underrepresented or historically marginalized population, this is very personal and you want to see progress — and you want to see progress quickly. That can be very difficult when you only have one individual that's driving the strategy and trying to execute or implement the programs and initiatives, or update the practices to ensure that there are more equities as part of this work.

The way I approach it is if it's just me, I can build a strategy. I can get people. I can show people the possibilities and how they can own different aspects of the implementation. I don't have to do everything. I can build a supplier diversity strategy. I can start to forge relationships. I can make the introductions. I can show the why, but we have a supplier diversity council that's charged with establishing the goals, monitoring the progress, and making sure that we're staying true to what we said we were going to do. I can talk about the various heritage and cultural experiences and observances and why they're important, and outline a framework of how we can celebrate or commemorate those observances and talk about the possibilities and set aside the budget, but I can't activate the ERGs to do the planning.

One of my mentors told me my goal is to work myself out of a job. I want to be able to contribute in such a meaningful way that 10 years from now, 20 years from now — shoot, five years from now — we don't need a vice president of DEI because this is truly just a part of who we are. And it's reflective in our leadership representation. It's reflective in the community impact that we make. It's reflective in our supplier portfolio. It's reflective in the culture.

What role has mentorship played in your career?

I haven't made any major decisions without consulting my personal board of directors, which includes my mentors and my executive coach. I rely on the wisdom and the guidance of people that have gone down the path before me, have experienced things that I haven't yet experienced, or I'm just starting to experience, or that can look at it objectively and take the emotion out of it. Oftentimes, I feel like I thrive on energy. I feel things. So I don't want to make decisions based solely off of emotion or without having thought about all of the things that can go into it. Mentors have been very, very important to me.

What traits make you an effective leader?

Galvanizing people and getting people excited and showing people the why and showing people the possibilities is very important. Therefore, being able to communicate effectively, being able to have empathy and humility ... you know, my experience is going to be very different from your experience.

There are so many different layers and intersections of diversity and social identities. Everybody's experience isn't going to be exactly the same. And that's a beautiful thing. But that also doesn't mean that I should be able to tell you how you should feel. I should be able to empathize and understand how things may negatively or positively impact you, but also be very considerate when we're building out strategies, when we're building out new practices or policies, and being mindful of how those decisions and those actions will impact different populations.

Most importantly, when you think about equity and inclusion, I would say [a trait of an effective leader is] extending grace and being able to meet people where they are and understand that everybody's not going to say the right thing all the time. People have lived their experiences for their entire lives. And for some people, some conversations are very new and it may be confusing. You have to be able to meet people where they are, give them the opportunity to learn and grow, and the grace so that they can recover after making the mistake, but not compromising in terms of what the end goal may be.





CHAVON CHAM
DIRECTOR, KIDS LIFESTYLE FOOTWEAR, NIKE

In a short time, you've ascended from an intern position to a business unit director at Nike. To what do you attribute that career growth and success?

I would attribute my career growth to representation in my life growing up. Coming from an inner city neighborhood in Boston, having those examples in my life really put into perspective where I saw myself going, what I desired for my career, my lifestyle. I'm the youngest of three. My sister often jokes that she's the blueprint, my older brother is the prototype, and I'm the masterpiece. Um, no pressure there! But I think just knowing that there's so much potential for who I could be really ignited this internal desire, aspiration and mentality of being a self-starter. Coming out of college and thinking about where I wanted to go, what I wanted to achieve, and wanting to be that example for a host of family and cousins, I was constantly in this position of being curious, wanting to learn, and putting myself in spaces to be able to have opportunities for that to happen.

What challenges have you faced in your career journey, particularly as a Black woman in a male-dominated industry? Secondly, what steps have you taken to overcome those challenges?

Being a woman, being African American, and being relatively young in corporate spaces automatically presents three unique and distinct challenges. For me it was entering into a space and seeing so many similarities and likenesses amongst my peers and colleagues. It was a bit intimidating being different. For a little while, I struggled with finding my voice and how to communicate and articulate that voice in certain spaces, especially at work. I recognized that I wasn't showing up authentically as myself. I was often trying to figure out, 'How do I fit in? How do I mold my style and my approach to fit that of what I saw in my surroundings?' And I think it took until some of the social injustice issues that were happening in our country.

Even just being remote during COVID-19 and finding a voice on Zoom that I recognize. As long as I'm not showing up authentically at work, I'm not creating an opportunity for others to learn from me, just as I've been a sponge and have been learning from those around me. It felt like I didn't have a seat at the table — not understanding the potential of my voice and how I could contribute to a conversation. It took a lot of self-reflection to recognize that if I'm going to be here, I want to fully be here and I have something to share.

As I started to do that, I found that it was more well received than I thought it would be. I had so many other

women, so many other associates of color, so many young people that were entering into business spaces that came to me and said, "Wow, to hear your voice in the room is so refreshing. It's such a different perspective. You have so much to contribute and add. I wish we heard from you sooner." That positive reinforcement and those words of affirmation only solidified what I knew I needed to do in order to give back. I was reaching a point in my career where I was able to progress and I realized that what was truly fulfilling for me was ensuring that other women, other people of color, and other young associates were able to do the same.

Were there others that acted as mentors or that you looked up to for inspiration to help bring that voice out?

Yes, throughout my career. I think initially sometimes it's hard to see what you can be if there's not that representation in those spaces. And coming from the companies that I've come from, there are not many women, there are not many people of color. Even for me growing up in Boston, you have six or seven big footwear companies that are in that space, and I never considered being in retail or being in footwear. Two things that are really important for me are mentorship and sponsorship. Understanding the differences between the two and how much value they can add is critical. From a mentorship standpoint, I definitely start with my mom.

I'm very fortunate to have a mentor in her. To see a woman of color rise to the ranking that she did, and to see her walk so confidently and speak so proudly and so boldly ... that was my first example that you can operate in these spaces, you can add value in these spaces, and then you can reflect on what it is to be for so many other young brown girls in corporate America. Having her as a role model and an example of what I could become really helped. I think it was always innate and a part of who I am, but to have her in that space and then for her to encourage that everywhere that I go to seek another mentor.

I've had several mentors in my career that I'm still in close contact with to this day that help me to navigate. Sometimes you don't know what you don't know. So when in a matrix hierarchy type of organization, you might see your ceiling as a certain level. But when you see other women say, "This is the path that I took. How do you envision yourself making your way through this organization? Where do you want to go? OK, let me put you in contact with this manager, this person in HR that can introduce you to additional programming." One of my closest mentors is Portia Blunt, who is a vice president at Reebok. During our shared time at New Balance, she was very intentional with saying, "Hey, I've been talking to this person and I think you might enjoy having a conversation with them. I know you don't cross paths based on your current day-to-day role, but I think you might find something inspiring from this leader."

She would make that introduction on my behalf and then allow me to be in that space to then cultivate the relationship myself. Having people that open the door for an opportunity is truly what helps. I've been able to create those relationships at each organization that I've worked with because I think it truly helps to guide you as you're figuring out where you go forward and what your future looks like.

What excites you about your current role at Nike? And what do you want in your career going forward?

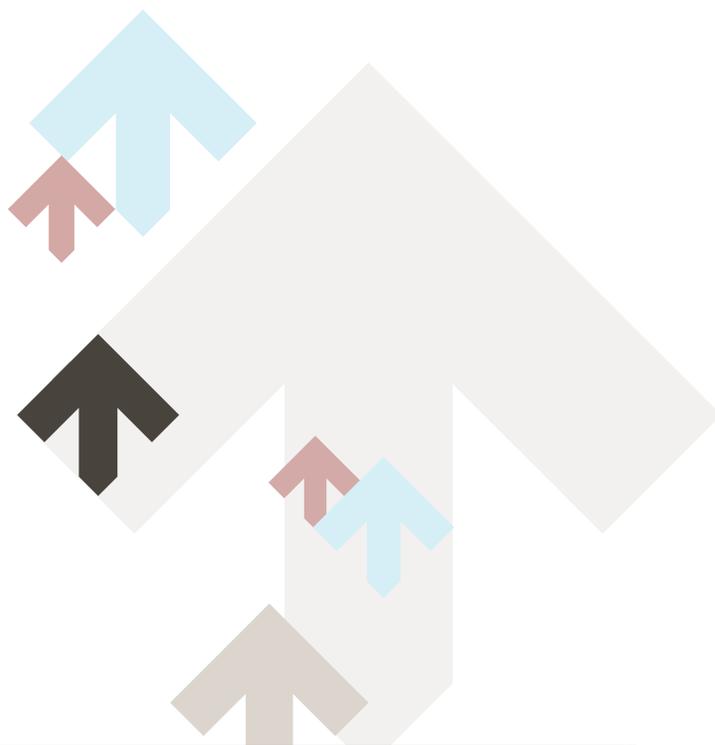
Being a footwear product director at Nike is truly inspiring. Most importantly, being a footwear product director in the kid's space is amazing and exactly where I want to be. When you think about the future generation, change leaders, people that are driving our future forward and knowing that we have new children being born into the world every single day, it's exciting to learn about who they are and what their interests are and what inspires them. When you talk to children, they're just so authentically themselves. They just show up as themselves. They're true to who they are. You see that even more and more as some of these generations grow and rise. To be a part of that, to be a part of their first steps, to be a part of their first goals, to be a part of that first day of school ... for me it's so much bigger than creating shoes.

It's more about being a part of those moments and a part of those memories for future leaders. The consumer that we serve excites me the most. In addition to that, moving to Oregon and being in person again with my team energizes me. I work with some incredible, caring, passionate and talented human beings. Combining that with who we're serving and knowing that you have some solid people behind the scenes making things happen is just the perfect combination of where I'd like to be in my career today.

You were nominated for this award by a member of the Women in Retail Leadership Circle community, Portia Blunt of Reebok. Can you talk about the role that mentorship has played in your growth?

I think mentorship is critical for everyone. For me personally, as a young Black woman in corporate America, it was even more important to ensure that I had an accountability partner that was rising in their own career as well. I was able to combine a personal relationship with a professional relationship to really get to know someone outside of my team, outside of my role that truly wanted to pour into me and inspire me through their walk and where they were going. I find mentoring relationships to be mutually reciprocated. As I grow and reach new heights, that's making my mentor proud. And as my mentor is growing and rising in their career, it's making me proud because it's showing me how far I can go.

Mentorship has always been a key part of my growth and my success. Equally as important as I continue to rise, I recognize the importance of sponsorship and not only having a mentor that helps to guide you and help you navigate through certain spaces, but someone that's bringing up your name and your experience and the value you add in rooms that you can't be in. The rooms that you haven't quite made it into yet. Someone that's advocating on your behalf and putting your name in the hat for opportunities that you might not have considered for yourself. I think that's how you continue to advance. That's how you continue to grow. That's how you continue to make connections and relationships with leadership that you might not have in your day-to-day role. I started to recognize the distinct differences between having a mentor and having a sponsor. And fortunately in my life with someone like Portia Blunt, I've been able to have both in a single person.





WOMAN
on the RISE

ANJALI KHOSLA
DIRECTOR, BRAND MANAGEMENT,
BUILD-A-BEAR WORKSHOP

What excites you about your current role at Build-A-Bear Workshop, and what do you want for your career going forward?

In my current role, I get to live in the future and I get to think about and work on what Build-A-Bear could be, who we could partner with. I really get to see the impacts of those projects immediately once they launch. Being in retail, you could have such a close relationship to the consumer, from product through to the actual experience, in our case. I find that really special for my career going forward. No matter what, I always want to be in a position where I can keep learning, growing and leaving a positive impact. Build-A-Bear has been a tremendous place for that for me.

To what do you attribute your career growth and success so far? How have you overcome challenges that may have presented themselves along your career journey?

I've been fortunate enough to have some amazing career opportunities, and having a great support system, from family to co-workers to mentors, has significantly helped me. I believe the best results are achieved through collaboration and teamwork. I also think an entrepreneurial mindset, which I bring to my role in terms of being open to new opportunities, constantly learning and being adaptable to change, has

also helped. When new directions open up, jumping in and seeing it as a chance for learning and being very grateful for that has been very positive. For example, in addition to brand management, I currently oversee licensing for Build-A-Bear. If you had asked me even just five years ago, I didn't think that was something I'd be doing. But I have genuinely loved learning and working in that space as well.

I try to flip the thought and see a challenge as an opportunity. How can I approach a situation to make it a win for everyone? Leading with that mindset, asking questions and seeking to understand and learn has helped me in any challenge I faced. I've also been lucky enough to have some great mentors who have overcome their own challenges and whose examples I can look to and advice I can seek. It goes back to being open to learning from many different sources. That's helped me in any industry I've been in, from technology to CPG to now in retail.

You serve on both the Diversity and Inclusion Council and the Build-A-Bear Foundation Team. Why is it important to be a part of these initiatives, and how do they help you grow professionally?

Leaving a positive impact in all areas of my life is extremely important to me. Being able to serve on the Diversity and Inclusion Council, as well as being on the board of directors for the Build-A-Bear Foundation, allows me to push for positive change and give back to different communities and organizations. I find it very meaningful and I don't think I'd be able to be fulfilled in my career if I couldn't see the benefits of the work I was doing and what that effect was having on the communities around me. They've also pushed me in my career to think about things in a new way and gain different perspectives, which is invaluable as you think about long-term strategies.

What role has mentorship played in your career?

As I mentioned earlier, I've had some wonderful mentors throughout my career who have helped me learn more about myself, the organizations I've been a part of, and the type of leader that I strive to be. They've helped me through challenges and provided tools I can use throughout my career. The amazing thing about mentorship is the ripple effect it has well beyond just the mentor and the mentee. Even in my career, I think about the advice or insights I've received from a mentor and how that's shaped the approach to not only my career, but my life. When I share that bit of insight with someone I'm mentoring, because I think it's important to help others grow along with you, I can see how it affects them and that positive growth continues on well past that initial conversation.





KRISTIN MCCLEMENT
HEAD OF BRAND CONNECTIONS, MAURICES

Can you share the wins you're most proud of at maurices and to what you attribute your success?

The brand was really reliant on traditional media before I came and saw a need for this, which is why they brought in someone like myself who had the background of modern day PR tactics. When I first arrived at maurices, I was able to quickly build a strategy around organic social media content, formalize an influencer marketing campaign, and introduce brand partnerships to the organization, which it had never had before. One of the biggest successes we saw in the first year was our celebrity ambassador program with country music superstar Lauren Elena. I pride myself on the hard work that went into everything last year, but I could not and would not have been able to do it without my team. My team is really the backbone of all the success that we have, and I'm so, so grateful for them.

What's a challenge you've faced in your career and how did you solve it?

An intimate apparel company I previously worked for had a false perception. One of our biggest challenges as a team was to change that perception to the general public and the media. As someone who is in charge of reputation within PR we really focused on being a solution-based brand, and we were able to take modern day PR efforts and tactics and really help change that perception within one year. We were able to be super successful at that with record-breaking KPIs across the board and a large increase in brand awareness.

“We all want to steer the ship in the right direction, and I believe I have the best possible ship for that, and that’s my team. They literally put the wind in my sales.”

What skills have helped you succeed?

My confidence, my negotiating skills, my communication skills and my relationship-building skills. I'm in the business of relationships and, in particular, not only those that I work with internally at organizations, but also external stakeholders.

What excites you about your current role at maurices and what do you wish for your career going forward?

We all want to steer the ship in the right direction, and I believe I have the best possible ship for that, and that's my team. They literally put the wind in my sales. As for my personal career growth, I'm forever a student who wants to continue to learn and see opportunities.

What are you most looking forward to personally and professionally in 2023?

This may sound odd, but every year I choose a word and at the beginning of that year I decide that's the word that I'm going to live by. In past years, it's been "balance" or "gratitude." In 2022, it was "grace," and I've decided that my word for 2023 is "appreciation." So both personally and professionally, I'm going to appreciate everything that I have and that I've been given and hopefully pay it forward in the right way for others.



JESSICA RAYMOND
**DIRECTOR OF MEDIA STRATEGY
AND PLANNING, FOOT LOCKER**

You joined Foot Locker about a year and a half ago. In that short time, you and your team have had some great wins. Which are you most proud of, and to what do you attribute your success?

Even though I started at Foot Locker in March 2021, I used to be at their media agency, so all my co-workers are also my old clients. I told them I would love to come work with them someday, and it luckily worked out for me!

I joined, as you can imagine, during a time of uncertainty for everybody. That's actually what I think I'm most proud of: how my team handled that. My team has shown a lot of resilience, having to adapt to a lot of different consumer dynamics and market dynamics that made us have to operate a little bit differently than the team had in the past. That means a lot of moving goal posts. Nobody likes change, but some change is inevitable and it's been great to see how much retention and camaraderie I've had on my team to deal with all of that.

You're a leader who is continually focused on finding new opportunities and challenging the status quo while making those around you stronger and smarter. What's an example of when you challenged the status quo?

I started right off the bat during the iOS14 update, when the system changed so that everyone was having to opt in to being tracked on apps. One thing I was really proud of was making a plan for that. Relying on some of the old ways of measuring success and paid media kind of went out the door. We've really moved to a model of understanding incremental impacts. So it means more experimentation vs. relying on Facebook, Google, etc., to tell us how we're doing. Instead, we're resetting back to putting tests in place and understanding the success of our work. I've been in digital marketing for about a decade, and I feel it's almost reverting back to where it had been with television. You have to do market tests, audience tests, and I really could geek out on those things! I've really enjoyed being able to educate all my leaders in my company about the data we used to be able to show you that old methods are no longer reliable, and here are the new methods that will measure ourselves.

What skills do you believe have been instrumental in your career development?

I always think of myself as being on a seesaw between patience and persistence. Those two skills are what I'm constantly pushing and pulling with, and that measurement methodology I just explained is a perfect example of how it

takes a really, really long time to get buy-in to do something completely differently. I have my moments of pulsing with the persistence of, "We cannot rely on old ways." This is not telling us what we need to make smart decisions. But then I realize I have to sit back, be patient and realize these things cost more money sometimes, or they need to go up the ladder and back down again. You can never be too persistent or else you run into a wall, or if you're too patient, nothing happens.

What excites you most about your current role, and what are you looking forward to in your career?

What most excites me right now is what I'm looking ahead to as well. I just got new leadership. My team had just rearranged a bit and I was able to get a new leader on my team that I'm very excited to work with. She has a really great background. And then similarly, we just got a new CEO, Mary Dillon, and I'm really excited about the energy she's bringing to the company.

I think what most excites me is the many projects I'm very passionate about. There are a lot of things that I'm personally excited about with regards to this new leadership, which is really going to be the catalyst to making all those things happen. I look forward to having that new energy that new people always bring, especially new leaders like Mary, who is able to have that trickle-down energy across the whole organization. Sometimes when things move slowly, all it takes is a new person to get everyone excited again.

Going forward, I'm really excited about what I do with paid media. It's probably the least glamorous part of marketing. Whenever I try to explain it to my mom, I'm like, "You know when you add something to your cart and then you see it everywhere, that's what I did!" If there's something you added to your cart that follows you everywhere, that's probably a sign that the campaign isn't set up very well. It shouldn't follow you everywhere. It should be the right amount of exposure so that you do want to buy it. I enjoy it so much because it's so data driven and experiment driven. I really like to get in the weeds of the data, and all these new changes we've had with leadership has allowed us to get excited about improving those types of things. I look forward to getting better and better at my craft.

What are you most excited about in the year ahead, professionally and personally?

I'm currently working part time toward my MBA, and I can't wait to get that done. I'm truly learning a lot and enjoying being there, but as you can imagine, it's a crazy time commitment. I applied as soon as I joined Foot Locker. They made it clear that this was a company where you can have a personal life and you can have personal endeavors. I applied because I want to keep getting smarter at what I'm doing. That's my end goal, and the classes I'm taking continue to get more and more relevant to what I'm doing on a day-to-day basis and what I aspire to do.

I really look forward to having these classes that are able to translate well to work and help myself help my team. I'm sure my team is sick of me sharing some of the articles I get from class, but they're so relevant! I think in undergrad it's so broad that you don't know how to apply it to what you do. I'm finding in grad school it's the opposite. It's exactly what I'm working on every day. So it's incredibly helpful.



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