

EVENTS/CAUSES

## Key lessons learned from New York blizzard preparations

January 28, 2015



*Instagram image from Bergdorf Goodman*

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By SARAH JONES

New York is returning to normalcy following a milder snowstorm than expected, but what can be gleaned from the preparedness strategies of luxury brands before the blizzard hit?

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While retailers closed up shop in Manhattan and hotels prepped for additional stranded guests, luxury brands kept consumers in the loop via digital channels to inform and show their concern for their audiences' safety. With the storm passed, these social platforms also enabled brands to get back to business as usual in a timely fashion.

"The response we've seen from marketers as Blizzard Juno hit really demonstrates how social media and digital technology can create a lifeline to consumers and foster connectivity and a sense of 'we're all in this together,'" said Stacy DeBroff, founder/CEO of [Influence Central](#), Newton, MA.

"So far we've seen brands communicate everything from online sales to product ideas promising to entertain snowbound kids and adults to messages of support and updates on when business will return to usual," she said. "Overall, it's a lesson in how real-time marketing can create both sales and customer goodwill opportunities – no matter how


bleak the forecasts are."

Getting ready

New York was expected to receive between 14 and 28 inches of snow from Juno, accumulating mostly Monday night, based on predictions from the National Weather Service. In reality, instead of breaking records, the city saw about 7 inches total in Central Park by Tuesday morning, with the bulk of the storm hitting west and north of the city.

In preparation for the storm, New York public transportation shut down at 11 p.m. Jan. 26, and a travel ban on roads was put into effect for non-essential vehicles. Beginning Tuesday morning, these restrictions began lifting as the city returned to normal.

Retailers used social media to alert consumers about their delayed openings. Bergdorf Goodman was cautious, telling its customers who live near the store that it would open again at 1 p.m., telling everyone else that it hoped they were "safe and warm."

 **Bergdorf Goodman** @Bergdorfs · 3h  
To our fellow New Yorkers, we hope you're safe & warm! For those near 5th avenue, the store will be open at 1pm today.

*Tweet from Bergdorf Goodman*

Bergdorf Goodman also shared a look ahead to spring accessories and shoes, reminding consumers of the upcoming season and warmer weather.

 **Bergdorf Goodman**  
1 hr · 

This blizzard only makes us look forward to Spring (and Spring accessories!) even more. Click on the link for details and to see the rest of our favorite picks: <http://brgdf.co/OO03tU>

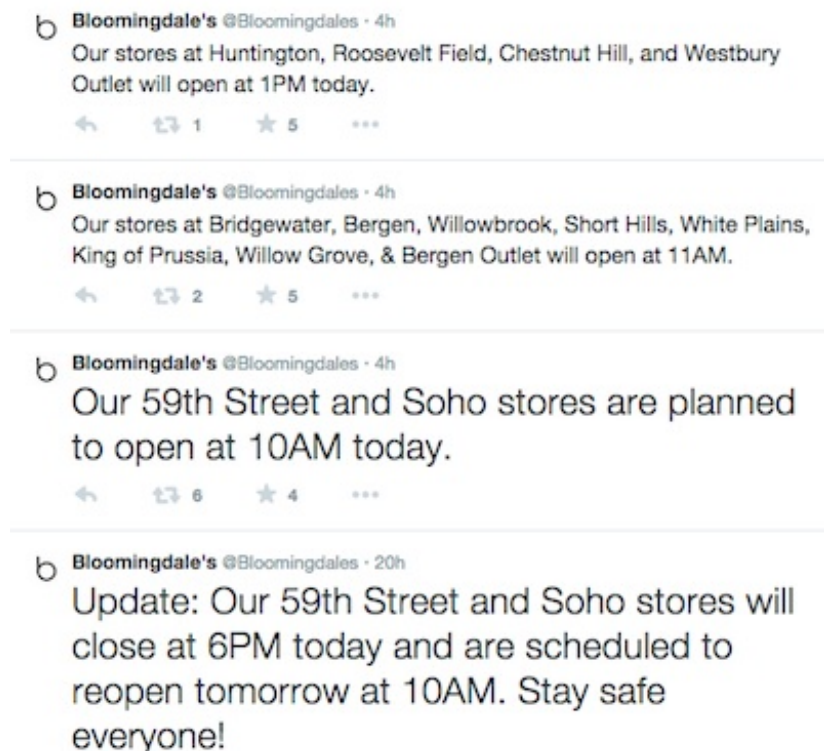
From top left to right:

1. Giuseppe Zanotti Design... [See More](#)



### *Facebook post from Bergdorf Goodman*

Bloomingdale's closed its SoHo and 59<sup>th</sup> Street stores at 6 p.m. as part of the preparation for the store, and reopened the same locations earlier than other Northeast stores at 10 a.m. Tuesday.

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- The image shows a screenshot of four tweets from the account Bloomingdale's (@Bloomingdales). Each tweet is preceded by a small blue bird icon. The tweets are separated by horizontal lines. The first tweet mentions opening at 1PM for Huntington, Roosevelt Field, Chestnut Hill, and Westbury Outlet. The second tweet mentions opening at 11AM for Bridgewater, Bergen, Willowbrook, Short Hills, White Plains, King of Prussia, Willow Grove, and Bergen Outlet. The third tweet mentions opening at 10AM for 59th Street and Soho stores. The fourth tweet is an update stating that the 59th Street and Soho stores will close at 6PM and reopen tomorrow at 10AM.
- Bloomingdale's** @Bloomingdales · 4h  
Our stores at Huntington, Roosevelt Field, Chestnut Hill, and Westbury Outlet will open at 1PM today.  
🔄 1 ⭐ 5 ...
  - Bloomingdale's** @Bloomingdales · 4h  
Our stores at Bridgewater, Bergen, Willowbrook, Short Hills, White Plains, King of Prussia, Willow Grove, & Bergen Outlet will open at 11AM.  
🔄 2 ⭐ 5 ...
  - Bloomingdale's** @Bloomingdales · 4h  
Our 59th Street and Soho stores are planned to open at 10AM today.  
🔄 6 ⭐ 4 ...
  - Bloomingdale's** @Bloomingdales · 20h  
Update: Our 59th Street and Soho stores will close at 6PM today and are scheduled to reopen tomorrow at 10AM. Stay safe everyone!

### *Tweets from Bloomingdale's*

For consumers looking to get out in the snow, brands that actively reached out were likely to grab their attention as prime destinations.

Barneys New York took a different approach, focusing on appealing to those with a snow day rather than driving in-store traffic. The retailer sent out an email and social media posts about a “snow day to-do list.”

Complimentary shipping and returns on all U.S. orders\*

BARNEYS  
NEW YORK

Get cozy.

SHOP NOW

### *Email from Barneys*

According to Barneys, consumers should “snuggle in and layer up” with an ecommerce edit of coats from Moncler, Lanvin, Chloé and others.

Four Seasons New York also kept consumers occupied during the storm, inviting them to participate in warm thoughts on Pinterest based on the Pantone color of the year, Marsala. In addition, the property provided updates on the snow.



### *Tweet from Four Seasons New York*

"Even though the blizzard never was in the city, out on the island, it appears to be the blizzard that is," said Paula Rosenblum, managing partner at [RSR Research](#), Miami. "So I'd definitely reopen with a soft sound rather than a splash. Employees may not be able to get to stores, and grocers have a lot of restocking to do.

"The other piece here is that Stew Leonard – as close to a luxury grocer as you can get – had their CEO on the Weather Channel, and he mentioned that his grandfather started a policy of overbuying on staples prior to a storm," she said. "So while other retailers were out of stock, Stew Leonard had plenty of milk, bread and eggs on hand."

### Be prepared

During a storm such as this, luxury brands and retailers have an opportunity to make a difference.

With the potential for power outages and reduced transportation, brands and retailers in the luxury capital of the world may have seen reduced foot traffic and sales. However, as consumers brave the nor'easter, and in the days following, brands have the opportunity to step in with assistance, making a memorable impression on those they help which will be remembered when the weather clears ([see story](#)).

While it may seem like over-preparedness from luxury marketers, it was better to be safe than sorry.

"Since the Atlanta snow of 2014, it is no longer politically correct to downplay weather warnings," RSR Research's Ms. Rosenblum said.

"The mayor of that town decided to take his chances, and failed," she said. "Therefore, you can never be over-prepared by definition."

### Final Take

*Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/tmks-bGfL\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/embed/tmks-bGfL_Q)

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