

EVENTS/CAUSES

## Barneys strives to make anything possible with gender equality campaign

October 7, 2015



*Barneys New York Madison Avenue flagship store*

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

Department store chain Barneys New York is calling on consumers to advocate for equality on International Day of the Girl.

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In partnership with The Girls' Lounge, the retailer is celebrating the United Nations-declared holiday with a social media campaign designed to call attention to workplace and other inequalities that hinder women's success. The initiative continues Barneys' tradition of being a leader among brands in social equality movements and creates a desirable and attractive image to prospective consumers.

"International Day of the Girl is all about raising awareness for girls' rights on a global level," said Charlotte Blechman, executive vice president of marketing and communications at **Barneys**, New York. "Social media plays such an important role in today's world, and it can be incredibly powerful when used for good."

### Girl possible

Throughout the world, women and young girls face some form of inequality, from lack of opportunities for professional work to lack of access to education, that contributes to an unequal world. International Day of the Girl (IDG) is a global day dedicated to raising awareness of these inequalities and advocating for gender equality.

Barneys is asking its consumer to support IDG by writing "anything is possible when" on a piece of paper, finishing the sentence, and taking a photo of himself or herself holding the paper. The photo should then be shared on social media outlets Instagram, Facebook and Twitter with #IDG2015 and #GirlPossible, as well as with @BarneysNYOfficial and @TheGirlsLounge and anyone the user wishes to nominate to partake.

**Anything is  
possible when...**

there is equality for girls  
across the world.

**#GirlPossible**

*Barneys IDG social campaign*

The Girls' Lounge, Barneys' partner in this campaign, creates spaces for women to connect, challenge and support one another within male-dominated industries.

"With this partnership, we hope to start conversations," said Shelly Zalis, founder of the Girls Lounge, in a statement to Barneys. "We're bringing visibility to women making a difference around the world, helping to ensure that girls get an education and feel empowered. We also want to transform the gender equality conversation from a female issue to a social and economic issue that we all have to solve together."



*Barneys display window*

Hashtags advocating social causes or pointing out a day's significance often become top trending topics on sites like Twitter, making it an ideal format for Barneys and The Girls' Lounge to spread awareness. The hands-off approach allowed by social media will also allow Barneys, who is tagged in the photos, to reach prospective consumers far more organically.

Join us & [@TheGirlsLounge](#) to support girls everywhere by participating in the global [#GirlPossible](#) movement. Details: [pic.twitter.com/bKNWqwn1mL](https://pic.twitter.com/bKNWqwn1mL)

Barneys New York (@BarneysNY) [October 6, 2015](#)

"This campaign requires engagement," said Marie Driscoll, CEO and chief consultant of Driscoll Advisors, New York. "If you aren't engaged, you are indifferent and disinterested. Engagement leads to emotional connections and bonding and ultimately the intangible stuff of our relationships with people and brands.

"In addition to being on the forefront of fashion, Barneys gets in front of social causes and has a point of view. This campaign should work well with young women who communicate via social media and expect socially responsible

messaging from the brands they use."

The campaign for IDG will also extend to the department stores' windows and to its online blog, print magazine and mobile application The Window, which highlights current fashion and lifestyle trends.

"Our windows across the country will be dedicated to IDG 2015 from Oct. 8-14," Ms. Blechman said. "The windows will showcase a digital slideshow of the crowd-sourced content acquired from the #GirlPossible campaign; highlighting answers from girls across the world of all ages about their beliefs in the power of possibility as it relates to gender."



*Screenshot from Barneys app The Window*

Barneys has a history of social activism, including such acts as hanging condoms on its Christmas trees to promote safe sex during the AIDS crisis. The brand's IDG celebration is another way of showcasing the brand's progressive values, which are especially important to younger consumers.

"Luxury is adopting to millennials' demands for real not perfect, and personal messages not mass communication," Ms. Driscoll said. "Once you see on 'fill-in' the mind can't help but to fill in the blank with your own answer-engaged!"

#### Equality now

This is not the first time this year that Barneys has displayed its ethical conscience.

Just two months ago, department store chain Barneys New York is supporting the fashion industry in its hometown through an initiative that promotes local manufacturing.

For its exclusive Made in New York collection, the retailer is partnering with the Council of Fashion Designers of America and the New York City Economic Development Corporation to bring designers together with Fashion Manufacturing Initiative grant recipients of varying specialties. With New York Fashion Week around the corner, having Barneys take up this cause may help spur change in the industry and bring more production back to New York (see story).

Of course, other department stores are just as quick to promote worthy causes. Canadian department store chain Holt Renfrew recently hosted a nationwide charity-shopping event in its shoe salons.

On the evening of Oct. 1, Holt Renfrew asked consumers to shop for a cause, with 10 percent of purchases being donated to The Shoebox Project for Shelters, a charity that looks to brighten the day of women in need by delivering

"little luxuries" housed in a decorated shoebox. Retailers frequently take on the role of community caretaker, giving back to local charities when possible ([see story](#)).

It has always been crucial for Barneys to show that its heart is in the right place, and that's more true than ever for IDG.

"Philanthropy and social responsibility has always been an extremely important part of the Barneys brand," Ms. Blechman said. "Historically, we have supported a number of human rights organizations, including DIFA, HRC, The Center, among many others.

"As a company who is made up of so many amazing women, we really felt that it was important for us to support women's and girls rights."

Final Take

*Forrest Cardamenis, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

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