

Q&A

Luxury Interactive sees connected experiences as binding theme for Oct. 16-18 show

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Speaker at Luxury Interactive 2016. Image courtesy of Worldwide Business Research

By MICKEY ALAM KHAN

Creating connected experiences is the focus of the 11th annual Luxury Interactive conference Oct. 16-18 in New York for luxury marketers interested in learning about digital marketing and ecommerce.

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Speakers run the gamut from executives working at Neiman Marcus, Barneys New York, Farfetch, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, Holt Renfrew, Proenza Schouler, Tiffany & Co. and Este Lauder. Content will chiefly dwell on how marketers can take back digital control of their brands, along with developing omni-business strategies and tapping interactive, innovative and immersive technology.

"I am thrilled that every single one of the 70 retail speakers represents a luxury brand some heritage, and some modern luxury," said Megan Kessler, program director for Luxury Interactive at Worldwide Business Research, New York.

"To me, that says luxury brands, finally, take seriously breaking free of heritage operations," she said.

In this Q&A, Ms. Kessler discusses the [three-day event's programming](#), its evolution from the previous year, choice of speakers, audience composition and exhibitors who include CreativeDrive, Dealmoon, Team One, Zmags, Opinion Lab, Qubit, 12 Digit, Reflektion and InRiver. Luxury Daily is media sponsor. Please read on:

What's the thinking behind this year's [conference theme](#)?

Luxury brands have been traditionally cautious with technology, but brands understand they must implement interactive, immersive and omni-marketing and buying technologies to stay relevant in a competitive market.

Over three days at Luxury Interactive, we focus on (1) taking back digital control of the brand i.e., away from "influencers," to re-own brand voice; (2) omni-business strategies, while keeping the customer at the center of all unified commerce plans; and (3) innovative and immersive technology that is forward thinking to push luxury brands away from heritage operations.

How is this event going to be different from last year's?

There will, of course, be our trademark case studies, panels and fun Champagne-filled cocktail parties.

In our 11th year of the event, we have added more types of interactive sessions, like Case Study Collectives where an executive gives a case study, and the poses a question to the audience for group collaboration.

We have "open mic" in-focus tracks for executives to share why they are there to solve XYZ-challenge, and then meet up with an executive who may have an answer.

I am very excited to feature executives from Tiffany and Co., Proenza Schouler, John Varvatos, and The Pierre Hotel on our Prediction Panel who will look into their crystal balls and tell us what disruptive tech luxury brands need to consider for their business.

Your choice of speakers says something about the state of luxury. What is it?

I had a good laugh when Wilhelm Schmid, CEO of A. Lange & Shne, was asked "Do you believe the definition of luxury is changing? What does luxury mean for you in 2016?" He responded, "Quite frankly, I don't like the word luxury too much because it's completely inflated. Everybody's using it. I've recently heard about a luxury muesli, because it has more raisins in it than others. I mean, that's how far the word luxury has been used."

And it really struck me as to who is speaking at Luxury Interactive.

I am thrilled that every single one of the 70 retail speakers represents a luxury brand some heritage, and some modern luxury. To me, that says luxury brands, finally, take seriously breaking free of heritage operations. Kering CEO Francois-Henri Pinault illustrated as such by saying, "Tomorrow's luxury isn't based on heritage and artisanal excellence. There must be creativity. And creativity's not good enough. The implementation must be right."

That creativity comes from not only product, but also its marketed messages via digital and, of course, how the product is sold in-store and online.



Megan Kessler is program director for Worldwide Business Research's Luxury Interactive 2017

Have you noticed a shift in the audience composition?

While CEOs, CMOs, heads of marketing/ecommerce/digital are the core of our audience, we have seen an emergence of business strategists, CIOs, CTOs, and creative directors join us.

We even have a creative director panel this year where the ladies will discuss how luxury brands must be innovative yet disciplined, with messaging across channels needing to surprise and delight, inform and entertain.

What can attendees expect to see on the show floor?

We have fantastic technologists joining us who are true market leaders in digital and ecommerce. These solution providers are the ones luxury brands need to look to, and work with, to ensure their products are delivered, figuratively and literally, to the right person at the right time.

And what can attendees expect to take away from **the show**?

There is a reason Luxury Interactive has a loyal audience, and that is because the executives truly learn that steps they need to for successful implementation of change.

I am honored to have worked with these executives for five years, and it's been exciting to see how their digital and ecommerce operations have thrived.

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