

MARKETING

## Luxury brands must anticipate consumers' dreams, not just needs

January 18, 2018



*Luxury customers expect to be catered to. Image credit: Luxury Portfolio International*

By DANNY PARISI

NEW YORK In the world of luxury concierge services, brands have had to anticipate not just a customer's need, but their vision for an entire luxury lifestyle.

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Speaking at Luxury Firstlook 2018: Exclusivity Redefined on Jan. 17, a panel of executives from a number of companies with a focus on service and catering to customers' specific needs spoke about the ways that luxury brands can anticipate what customers require. A prevalent theme of the panel was that luxury is about selling a lifestyle and not just individual products.

"We need to listen to a customer in a deep way," said Martin Shanker, president of Shanker Inc. "Not just what their need is but what their dream is in order to give them that service.

"Listen for what's unsaid," he said.

*Luxury Daily produced Luxury FirstLook 2018: Exclusivity Redefined*

### Anticipating needs

Luxury customers are used to a specific type of treatment. An affluent customer expects a brand to be able to anticipate his or her needs and meet those requirements in quick and convenient ways.

This has extended to all areas of the luxury world, from retail to real estate.

For example, real estate agents used to only have to sell customers on a house, but now they have to sell them on the whole neighborhood and on a luxury lifestyle.

Paul Boomsma, president of Luxury Portfolio International, spoke about how his company's real estate agents are trained to court customers and make them feel as if they are purchasing their ideal lives and not just an ideal house.

"We are very high touch," Mr. Boomsma said. "They are buying a lifestyle and not just a home.

"So we show them the area, the neighborhood," he said. "It's so experiential so we need to be 100 percent informed

on every amenity out there."



*Paul Boomsma, Wolfgang Schaefer, Martin Shanker, Lisa Koenigsberg and Amber Treshnell. Image credit: Luxury Daily*

The panel also talked about the ways that technology and service can work in concert. One point that the whole panel agreed on was that technology should never replace the human element of service.

For example, a sales associate can use technology to help a customer through the shopping process, but brands should not completely replace sales associates with impersonal technology.

One way to ensure that sales associates are as effective as possible is to focus on training them to always put the customer's needs first.

"Two words: customer obsessed," said Amber Treshnell, CEO for Americas at John Paul. "If we cannot do something for a customer, we want [our employees] to get a pit in their stomach."

Technological augmentation

Concierge services can provide luxury consumers with the welcoming and intimate connection to brands that are so valuable to the luxury market.

Some of the biggest names in the luxury retail world have already embraced the power of concierges.

For example, British retailer Harrods is managing a row of luxury London homes, leveraging its in-store services to cater to residents' needs.



*Harrods is bringing concierge services to its real estate assets. Image credit: Knight Frank*

Located in the St. John's Wood neighborhood of the city, the Hamilton Drive development includes 10 Georgian-style mansions that were constructed out of dilapidated garages. Owners, who will live in close proximity to Harrods, will be able to take advantage of perks such as cleaning services and reservation booking through a concierge program ([see story](#)).

An additional value that concierges can provide is to help customers understand the products, especially for

consumers who may be from other countries or cultures.

"One of the most important things is the incorporation of experience to help educate people on understanding the nature of and reason for purchasing a quality product over something else," said Lisa Koenigsberg, founder and president of Initiatives in Art and Culture.

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