

WATCHES AND JEWELRY

With Baume by Baume & Mercier, a new kind of company is born

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Baume: new model, watch out. Image credit: Baume

By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

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Richemont Group recently launched its new brand, an ambitious startup named Baume aimed at reconnecting products with nature.

The affordable, genderless line of watches has been making headlines for its decision to use recycled and sustainable materials, but the merchandise is not the only thing that distinguishes Baume from other players in the luxury league.

"The startup model is probably the best way to describe the organization and management approach, it is the model that makes the most sense given the brand's disruptive nature," said Baume head Marie Chassot.

"As Baume's ambition is to reconnect with nature we took inspiration from it, and an important dynamic that you find in nature is collaboration," she said. "You see this clearly when you're in a forest or in the middle of a field, how everything has a well-defined role, working with each other to create balance."



Piecing it together. Image credit: Baume

Teal organization

The new company wanted to implement that same approach in the way that its team works internally, which ultimately led it to adopt a "Teal Organization" structure, which consists of three key elements: self-management, wholeness and organization as a living ecosystem.

"Team members are given complete trust, creating space for them to take on their responsibilities fully, with the support of a well-defined decision making process," Ms. Chassot said.

When it comes to wholeness, Baume places a heavy emphasis on employees bringing diversity to the table. Part of this is based on shattering the concept of the workplace and home as separate entities.

"We need to encourage people to bring all aspects of their personality to the table and not leave anything at the door before entering the building," Ms. Chassot said.

"We need to make room for diversity, whether that refers to character, vision and background," she said. "This a huge source of wealth for a company and a key factor in its success."

The idea of managing companies in a more progressive way, starting with equality and internal harmony, is a trend that other luxury brands have also deemed worthy of exploration.

Patagonia and Zappos are two examples of non-luxury companies that have embraced a similar self-regulating style of management.

"The traditional hierarchical structure is being challenged as companies explore new ways of adapting their operations to remain agile and competitive in the fast-changing Digital Age," said Marc-Olivier Peyer, senior digital marketing manager for agency DLG ([Digital Luxury Group](#) and parent of Luxury Society), based out of Geneva and Shanghai.

"For organizations, it also boils down to creating a working environment that is fit to attract and retain the best talents," he said.



Hand's-off approach. Image credit: Baume

Baume versus Baume & Mercier

While derivative of its parent brand, Baume & Mercier, it is important to acknowledge the new line is very much a brand of its own provocatively abandoning the concept of hierarchical management and creating space for new energy.

"As we are operating with a horizontal management structure, there is a strong culture of opportunity management as opposed to the traditional hierarchical structure with multiple approval levels," Ms. Chassot said.

"The brands at Richemont are maisons that have been around for centuries, with rich heritage and admirable savoir-faire, which also implies ways of working that have also been around for a long time," she said.

Mr. Peyer also notes that Baume serves as a sort of experiment within the Richemont Group, and that some of the insights gleaned from it will likely be applied to other parts of the broader organization.

Consumer needs

Richemont recently opened an innovation lab in Switzerland. So was Baume created there? Not exactly.

While the lab functions as an innovation hub for brands to work on new technologies, movements, product functions and more, it is not the birthplace of Baume. It did, however, play an important role in its inception.

"[The innovation lab] provided an important environment where we made the decision to take part in the Viva Technology fair in Paris with key startup partners," Ms. Chassot said.

"It was an amazing learning experience for the brand and provided a strong platform for us to introduce Baume to the wider tech and innovation community," Ms. Chassot said.

BAUME IS VERY MUCH a brand based on the dynamics between team members and consumer needs. Its target is less of an age group, and more of a mentality.

The aim is to offer an enriching and authentic journey from the team behind the brand to the customer experience.

"Our purpose is evolutionary, we want to grow with our clients, fulfill their aspirations and expectations, while addressing the challenges of today's world which concerns them as much as they do us," Ms. Chassot said.

"We had to build a team of likeminded individuals that shared a strong concern for our planet, an entrepreneurial spirit, a taste for risk taking and willingness to challenge the status quo, just like our customers," she said.



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