

HOME FURNISHINGS

DTC digital strategies must continue to evolve: Riley Home president

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Image credit: Riley Home

By SARAH RAMIREZ

NEW YORK As more high-end lifestyle companies launch online, it is vital for them to inform consumers about their products' inherent value in a creative manner to help them compete with heritage brands.

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During a presentation called "Retraining Your Mind to a New Understanding of What Constitutes Realistic Digital Growth" at Luxury Interactive on Oct. 15, an executive from Riley Home emphasized product quality and personalization as key ways to engage consumers. Experimenting with brand ambassadors and digital marketing methods can also help newer brands reach untapped audiences.

"In marketing, there is need and want," said Heather Kaminetsky, president of [Riley Home](#). "The goal of luxury is to get to the want.

"How do you get someone to want your product?" she said.

Quality and customization

With its linens and towels, Riley Home occupies a category considered a necessity instead of an aspiration.

To convince shoppers to purchase luxurious sheets and similar products through Riley Home, the brand markets the details instead of the functionality. The direct-to-consumer brand only sells its products via its Web site, making product quality more difficult to convey.



Image credit: Riley Home

For a nominal fee, prospective customers can order swatches of two fabrics Riley Home uses for its bedding. Not only is the cost applied as credit to a future order, but the samples also serve to better educate shoppers while reducing the chances that customers will return used and unwanted products.

The company's conversion rates also improved once its marketing made clear that purchases were "risk-free" for shoppers. Riley Home offers free standard shipping, and return shipping is of no cost to the consumer within 60 days.

With so many online shoppers relying on product reviews, Riley Home has also found that offering incentives for customers to leave feedback costs less long-term than acquiring new customers through other means.

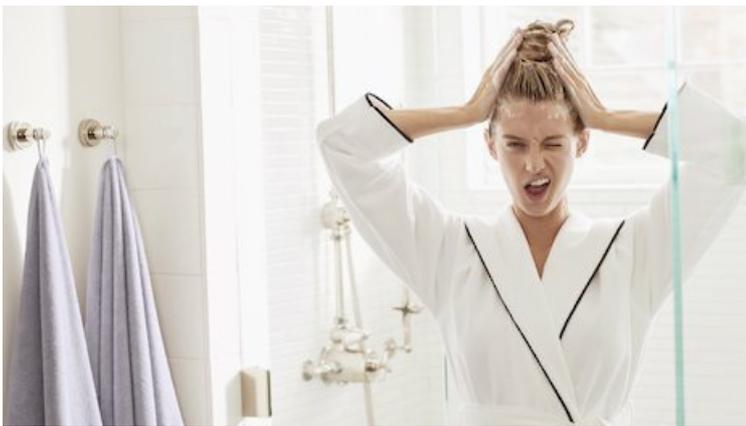


Image credit: Riley Home

Personalization options, such as monogramming, also drive a significant number of sales, including gift purchases by brand advocates. Customization is offered for Riley Home robes, shams and more.

"People love things that are made for them," Ms. Kaminetsky said. "You're not only getting people to buy for themselves, but you're getting people to buy for others."

Influencer experiments

According to Ms. Kaminetsky, Riley Home has found success partnering with micro influencers over macro influencers.

Although micro influencers may have smaller followings, they also have more authentic appearances.

Each type of influencer presents brands with different pros and cons. Shareablee categorizes influencers into tiers based on their audience size and availability.

For instance, there are only hundreds of celebrities with more than 20 million followers while there are hundreds of millions of "micro" influencers with followings of 250,000 and less. Celebrity influencers and macro influencers who have an average audience size of 2 million followers create 43 percent of content but drive 96 percent of engagement.

With more than 180,000 posts of branded content online, brands need to be selective and work with influencers who are authentic, trustworthy and engage with their audiences. These traits also need to coincide with campaign goals

to make the partnership valuable ([see story](#)).

"The more you try, the more you learn," Ms. Kaminetsky said. "Direct-to-consumer isn't new, but it's evolved."

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