

RETAIL

Starboard Cruise Services' Beth Neumann: Luxury Woman to Watch 2019

November 14, 2018



Beth Neumann

By STAFF REPORTS

Luxury Daily annually honors 25 smart women executives who show the potential to make a difference next year in the luxury business. This year's list features honorees who have set ambitious goals to achieve in a luxury market that, while growing, is also challenged by rapid changes in consumer behavior and technology.

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Here is one honoree:

Beth Neumann, CEO, **Starboard Cruise Services**, Doral, FL

"The biggest challenge is transforming cruise retail from transactional retail to experiential retail"

What do you most like about your job?

The most inspirational moments for me at Starboard are when I sail onboard a ship and see the impact of our transformed experiential retail.

I see cruise guests enjoying shopping for exciting merchandise and watch them delight in fun, social events where they are immersed in brand experiences while connecting with other guests and being treated like VIPs by our talented shipboard staff.

Probably even more exciting for me is when I hear that our shipboard staff are enjoying their jobs more because they see how they are bringing joy to guests through exceptional experiences and personalized hospitality that results in a purchase of merchandise that will forever remind them of their joyful vacation.

It's also rewarding to know we are valued partners and collaborators with our cruise line partners and through that collaboration we helping to strengthen their brand image and relationships with the cruise travel market.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

The biggest challenge is transforming cruise retail from transactional retail to experiential retail and inspiring brands and the cruise industry to embrace the change.

We call our new retail reality approach "The Starboard Way":

- Every employee sees themselves as the reason a guest comes back again and again
- Every employee genuinely connects with guests beyond the shopping experience as an "in-the-know friend" who has recommendations on how to best enjoy the cruise from restaurants to shore excursions
- Retail as a destination for fun experiences, for learning new fun facts, for meeting other cruise guests, and for being treated as a VIP with exceptional one-to-one-focused hospitality to find the perfect item that will remind them of the joy of their cruise vacation
- When people have been doing a job a certain way, it is critical to demonstrate to them that embracing experiential retail will not only help them produce superior results but will create greater job satisfaction. Time and coaching are needed to bring about that change
- A good example is a talented fine jewelry specialist I spent time with onboard Celebrity Equinox. She has always been successful at Starboard, but her first reaction to embracing experiential retail was "I know what I am doing, and I do not need to evolve. I can't, and I won't."

Three months later, she told me she is even more engaged than she imagined because she has never seen such delight in eyes of her customers. She told me she "never wants to go back to the old way of selling" with the advice that every shipboard employee needs to have the same change journey to have a more successful and enjoyable future.

I love that she is now a powerful change agent demonstrating to her peers that they will love their jobs more by focusing on entertainment, discovery, social interaction and exceptional and deeply personalized hospitality

What is your work priority for 2019?

My top priority is bringing the next level of exciting merchandise and innovative new retail experiences to cruise retail and create a successful retail business model for our cruise partners and enhance their brand reputation within the cruise industry.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

Creating firsts at sea experiences with some of the most iconic brands in the world, such as Cartier, Hublot, Tiffany and others and for gaining their trust to represent them as they would in their own stores.

Most of these brands have never had an operation on a cruise ship, and I'm thrilled that we have successfully opened their eyes to a new and worthy market channel.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2019?

Successful luxury products will continue to provide high touch, exceptional experiences that align with personalization, authenticity and discovery through distinct and intimate experiences, like behind-the-scenes previews, exclusive product experiences and curated collections.

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