

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Businesses have a duty to evolve sustainable practices

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LVMH pledges to use only LED lighting by 2020. Image credit: DR T Fondaco Dei Tedeschi, LVMH

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

CAPE TOWN, South Africa Those that are hoping to change their brands to be more environmentally friendly will need to speak the language of each department's executives for better communication, advises an LVMH environmental director.

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While turning a company to be a sustainable enterprise can be a daunting exercise to some, especially a heritage company such as LVMH who has such a long history, the group's environment director Sylvie Bnard explained that it is important to work with everyone throughout an organization and talk to them in a language they understand. During a panel session at the Cond Nast International Luxury Conference on April 11, Ms. Bnard, along with B-Team cofounder Jochen Zeitz and creative director of RBURN and Timberland Christopher Raeburn agreed that businesses need to do their part to change the direction in which the world is heading.

"At the moment I have the feeling I convinced everyone I am able to convince," Ms. Bnard said. "I have to go further. Now it is getting to the designer."

We all can help

While the executives did not always agree on how change must be accomplished, they all agreed that businesses are responsible to do their part in the fight against climate change and other environmental crises.

Mr. Zeitz firmly believes that the use of fur should be stopped and tanning leather practices need to be changed. Ms. Bnard challenged him on this during the panel, citing research from scientists that revealed stopping the use of regulated fur could open up the opportunity for more poaching.



Furla has joined the fur-free movement. Image credit: Furla

In the world of LVMH, Ms. Bnard feels as though she has convinced everyone that can be convinced, so it is time to move on to the designers, which can be a daunting task.

Beyond just the designers, the environmental director needs to help instill sustainable practices in all forms of LVMH's business. When citing that she needs to speak the language of her collaborators, Ms. Bnard means that she needs to emphasize the importance of the issue in a way that is specific to that division.

For instance, in speaking with financial divisions of LVMH, the director will touch on how a change can save or make the company money. When it comes to the marketing team, she will emphasize the image it can produce for the brand.

Ms. Bnard revealed that LVMH has also integrated an education program within its business to inform its associates of the importance of sustainability and what they can do in regards to it.

Thankfully, younger generations are more focused on saving the earth and are more ready to take action.



Ms. Bnard speaks at CNI Luxury. Image credit: Cond Nast International

Beyond consumers, young employees are willing to put in the work needed to turn around the predicament many scientists believe mankind has put the planet in.

Ms. Bnard believes, along with the other panelists, that it is not the job of just one brand, but that everyone needs to work together to change.

Time for change

LVMH's director is not just preaching, but has enabled the company to practice what she teaches.

The luxury goods conglomerate recently introduced new requirements for its crocodilian leather sourcing, as the group continues its quest to be more transparent about animal welfare and other sustainability issues.

LVMH plans to have all the farms supplying its exotic leather tannery certified by its new standards by 2020.

Affluents are expecting more transparency and public initiatives from luxury brands as they grow more aware of environmental issues ([see story](#)).

For Green Week, the company shared the details of its environmental efforts as it strives for sustainability at all stages of the supply chain.

Green Week is organized by the European Commission. LVMH was one of many companies participating, and the group posted several explanations of what it does to help push towards sustainable goals ([see story](#)).

"My first job is to find the language of the other and the second is to find the tools they are using," Ms. Bnard said.