

MEDIA/PUBLISHING

FT's Jo Ellison on how she re-imagined "How To Spend It" for new era

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FT's *How To Spend It* magazine redesign. Image courtesy of Financial Times

By DIANNA DILWORTH

The *Financial Times*' luxury lifestyle magazine, "**How To Spend It**," has gained a new look that expands its coverage of how affluent consumers are spending their money with refreshed favorites and new features.

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Embracing a broadened definition of the word "spend," the title that rides piggyback with the print *FT* newspaper challenges readers to think about how style and fashion is changing as we become more socially and environmentally conscious.

"I wanted to have more structure in the magazine so that there was a greater sense of flow from start to finish," said Jo Ellison, editor of "How To Spend It," London. "I wanted to place a greater priority on original artwork and photography, and to deliver it in an impactful fashion.

"I wanted to reinvigorate old templates of regular features so that they looked fresh and modern," she said. "I wanted to refocus our fashion content. And I wanted to deliver more stories in each issue."

FT's *How To Spend It* plays in the same lifestyle magazine supplement segment as *The Wall Street Journal's* WSJ, T: The New York Times Style Magazine and products from other British competitors such as *The Telegraph*.



Jo Ellison is editor of the Financial Times' How to Spend It magazine

Spring look

The new book launched with the Women's Spring Style issue that dropped earlier this week. The timing was aligned with London Fashion Week.

"It was the first significant publication of 2020, we only publish one issue in January, after weekly issues from September to December," Ms. Ellison said. "Having a natural pause in the schedule allowed for a moment to redesign. It was also a great moment. Launching during London Fashion Week was a perfect platform on which to amplify our efforts."

While the print book is at the heart of the redesign, the **magazine's digital edition** and social platforms are integrated as well.

Ms. Ellison pushes to ensure that one voice and a cohesive point of view lives across both print and digital platforms.

"My general rule of thumb is: 1) Would you want to promote this story on your own Instagram feed (ie: is it work you're proud of)? 2) What image/graphic/headline would you use to make it sing?," Ms. Ellison said.

"If the visuals don't work, nothing works," she said.

"We've pared down some of the online content to remain consistent with the print editorial tone of voice, and we are rethinking our publishing schedule to consider its impact on social media, especially Instagram, as well as within the broader sphere of FT.com," she said.

Curiously, print helps fuel social media conversations for the publisher.

"Despite our obsession with digital platforms, I'm always amazed by how people will post digital content about the printed page," Ms. Ellison said. "There's nothing that gives levity, authority and credibility to a story than the fact you saw it in print."



How To Spend It spring issue. Credit: How To Spend It

New direction

Ms. Ellison joined the award-winning magazine last September after relinquishing her role as fashion director of the *FT*. This is her first refresh since taking helm.

Newly appointed creative director Rasha Kahil and magazine fashion director Isabelle Kountoure also worked on

the new look.

Ms. Ellison has also appointed new contributing writers Alexander Fury, Nicola Moulton and Ajesh Patalay, and stylists Francesca Burns and Julian Ganio.

Under Ms. Ellison's direction, the magazine's focus has been updated on a range of topics, from food and health to philanthropy and fashion.

New features in the magazine include a letter from the editor; The Fix, a new section on trends, shopping and interviews; new wellness, health and beauty coverage; a city guide with personal recommendations, favorite haunts and hidden gems; as well as a new back-page column in which notable authors will divulge personal passion.

Additionally a section called The Cause will highlight the work of philanthropists, celebrities and creatives working to change the world.

Classic columns such as The Aesthete, The Find and Cult Shop, as well as the shopping page have also been refreshed.

"We will still do many themed issues on arts, design, travel, escape, throughout the year," Ms. Ellison said. "And we're putting a new focus on health, beauty and food."

THE MAGAZINE targets educated, discerning, curious and international readers. It has a fair gender split in readership.

"It's important not to alienate male readers," Ms. Ellison said. "Obviously, the Women's Fashion issue had a gender bias, but that certainly isn't consistent with any new agenda."

"My target demographic remains people who want relevant, interesting, surprising and ultimately inspiring stories about how to spend their lives," she said.