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Saks Fifth Avenue's Emily Essner: Luxury Woman to Watch 2021

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Emily Essner

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

Luxury Daily annually honors smart women executives who show the potential to make a difference next year in the luxury business. This year's list features 26 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:

Emily Essner, chief marketing officer, **Saks Fifth Avenue**, New York

"We need to determine how to serve customers in new and different ways to evolve with changing lifestyles and shopping preferences"

What do you most like about your job?

I feel fortunate that I get to shape an iconic brand that helps people to mold their identity through fashion.

Saks has always been known for delivering the best assortment and unparalleled services and experiences, but driving the strategy and overseeing the growing teams behind it has been truly gratifying.

More than anything though, working with great people and getting to watch individuals develop and pursue their passions is the best part of my job and incredibly rewarding.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

It's always a challenge to make the right short-term decisions while being able to drive long-term strategic goals.

Trying to do the right thing for tomorrow, while not losing sight of where we need to be several years down the road can be tough. It's always a balancing act.

Likewise, identifying and prioritizing the needs of the business and keeping up with the evolving customer demands requires focus, determination and a forward-thinking mindset.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

Since the start of the pandemic, the team has done a tremendous job in rethinking how we operate and best serve our customers.

We quickly created and leveraged new services Zoom appointments, curbside pickup, Hamptons delivery to cater to our clients in innovative ways.

While it has been a challenging time, it has also given us a great opportunity to hyper-accelerate longer-term strategic priorities, such as service offerings and digital initiatives.

What is your work priority for 2021?

Next year we will really see the hard work on our personalization strategy come to life.

Over the past several years, Saks has been laying the groundwork for several big projects, such as relaunching our new Web site, which will be the next significant milestone in our data and personalization strategy.

We will also supercharge our personalization efforts with new data and platforms to allow us to move faster and serve our customers in more meaningful and individualized ways.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

Shaping what Saks means to customers has been a top priority for me.

We have put in the work to evolve our brand image into a more inspiring, exciting and chic Saks Fifth Avenue.

We've really modernized the brand and delivered a better experience for our clients.

We have also been a lot bolder in using our voice and platform to push important cultural conversations.

From supporting LGBTQ+ rights with our Stonewall Inn partnership last year to championing women in power with our Fearless Female Speaker Series in 2018 as well as our upcoming Voting campaign, Saks is committed to creating meaningful change in communities across North America.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

As an industry, we need to determine how to serve customers in new and different ways to evolve with changing lifestyles and shopping preferences.

We will be constantly evaluating what is working for stores and clients to create the best experience possible, such as virtual eventing, integrated online and in-store experiences, and contactless services.

We will also continue to utilize more data to inform our decision-making processes to best serve our clients when and where they want to experience Saks.

[Please click here to see the entire Luxury Women to Watch 2021 list](#)