

MARKETING

## Resiliency, adaptability crucial to navigating fashion, retail industries

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Media professionals examine career and industry changes during panel discussion at the Michigan Fashion Media Summit. Image credit: Getty

By NORA HOWE

In the past year, pivoting has become central to the fashion, retail and media industries, but the notion of adaptability extends far beyond the scope of this time.

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During a virtual panel conversation at the [Michigan Fashion Media Summit](#) on March 8, fashion and retail industry professionals discussed the power and importance of adapting to change and creating new career opportunities. The panel speakers reflected on ways they have shifted career paths, and provided advice for young professionals trying to navigate the industry.

"Give yourself permission to change and not know who you are at this moment in time," said Sharon Kanter, senior director of editorial and content strategy at [Stuart Weitzman](#), New York. "As that evolves, I guarantee you will change with it."

### Personal pivots

The panelists began by simply examining the definition of the term "pivot," pushing the boundary of its use.

Moderator Jenny Rooney, editorial communities director and chair of the CMO Network at [Forbes](#), suggested there is somewhat of an inherent meaning behind the word that it requires a 180 degree or massively risky change. However, she explained that it can also involve any incremental decisions one makes throughout a career.

"I [temporarily] left an industry [media] where I was doing really well, and went into something called database marketing," said Nancy Berger, publishing director and chief revenue officer at [Cosmopolitan](#), [Women's Health](#) and [Seventeen Magazine](#). "I left because I fundamentally believed that the more you understand your customer, the better you can serve your customer."

"Go somewhere different to learn a new skill and bring it back to something you love," she said. "[This pivot] gave me a new lens one that most people were not yet looking through."



*Panelists encourage networking, especially in regards to career and industry pivots. Image credit: Getty*

In a more large-scale example of career pivoting, Marisa Thalberg, chief brand and marketing officer at [Lowe's](#), provided insight on a time in her life when she thought she ruined her career with one pivot.

She left her "exciting" executive role at Calvin Klein Cosmetics to work for a home furnishings company the biggest career risk she had ever taken. Looking back, she acknowledges it was a misstep, but not a mistake.

"The ability to pivot is quite Darwinian, in a way," Ms. Thalberg said. "The ones who are able to adapt will be the ones who survive."

Following up on the idea of career shifts and taking new opportunities to grow professionally, the speakers discussed the notion of balancing personal and professional demands.

"Even the idea of balance sets us up to sound unsuccessful," Ms. Thalberg said. "If you are intent on having a successful career, accept that you are going to have to give it your all."

"Some days you will have to give more towards your personal life," she said. "So long as you can pull back, examine your career and feel like you are doing well."

She advised that no one truly feels like they have it all together in perfect equilibrium something she suggests is nearly impossible to achieve as human beings.

"You can have it all, you just cannot have it all at the same time," Ms. Berger said in agreement.



*Ultimately, priorities change and interests shift, so people should stay open-minded to new opportunities, according to the panelists. Image credit: Getty*

Especially now, the fashion, retail and media industries are shifting more rapidly than ever, and as trends and technological developments continue to catalyze change, industry professionals must be open to adaptation.

"In different phases of life, different things will carry importance," Ms. Kanter said. "It is okay if they change."

#### Self-care is key

In response to questions about work-life balance, the speakers spoke about the importance of both physical and mental health. Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, companies across all industries have shifted their focus to amplify the importance of mental and physical wellbeing.

When the COVID-19 virus first struck New York City in March 2020, the Saks Fifth Avenue Foundation made a \$600,000 donation to New York-Presbyterian, Bring Change to Mind and Girls Inc. organizations that have reported a

particularly high need for mental health services and resources ([see story](#)). This effort came a month after the retailer debuted a mural dedicated to mental health awareness in the windows of its flagship store in New York in partnership with Fountain House and Crisis Text Line ([see story](#)).

In January, hospitality group Rosewood Hotels & Resorts unveiled a new wellness retreat idea designed to enhance one's ability to recover from life's adversities. The elements of the retreat address the physical, emotional and mindful aspects of each participating individual, focusing on four main behavior elements to resilience: positivism, purpose, resourcefulness and compassion ([see story](#)).

"As you go down your career path, it is important to take care of you," *Cosmopolitan's* Ms. Berger said. "You can not lose yourself."

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