

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability needs to be inclusive, cross functional: Burberry exec

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Burberry is helping suppliers introduce more sustainable practices. Image credit: Burberry

By SARAH RAMIREZ

More luxury brands and retailers are establishing circular cultures, from enhancing supply chains to leveraging technology to educate consumers about transparency.

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During a panel session at the Progressive Retail virtual conference on Oct. 11, sustainability and supply chain experts from Burberry and Yoox Net-A-Porter discussed how environmental strategies have become business strategies. Panelists also shared how consumers have responded to recent sustainability efforts.

"It's everyone's responsibility to drive the sustainability initiative forward, and we fully support that from a Burberry perspective," said Laura Culligan, director of global strategy and programs at Burberry, London.

"In a luxury business in particular, everybody has to be behind the initiative and that's starting from designers and creatives, all the way through to finance and logistics," she said. "It's really a systematic change and, therefore, everyone needs to go on the journey together."

The conversation was moderated by Sandra Campos, CEO of supply chain company Project Verte.

Sustainability meets the value chain

From the bottom to the top, luxury continues to move in a more sustainable direction.

According to Ms. Culligan, each department at Burberry is responsible for taking into account environmental and social impacts of their decisions. The brand's responsibility agenda is shaped by the ethic committee, the risk committee and the board, in addition to external and independent advisors and 30 in-house sustainability experts.

Burberry is also working with supply chain partners to minimize the impact of material sourcing and the production of goods. At stores, sustainability "champions" make frequent adjustments in areas including water and energy usage, which has a cumulative impact on carbon emissions and the environment as a whole.

"It's truly a cross-functional effort, and I think very inclusive for people in whatever team and function you're in," Ms. Culligan said.

Meanwhile, as a multibrand online retail group, Yoox Net-A-Porter has the opportunity to support emerging designers as they learn more about sustainability.

The Modern Artisan initiative, in partnership with the Prince Foundation, plays a key role, according to Frederica Bertolani, senior sustainability manager at Yoox Net-A-Porter, Milan.

[Modern Artisan ref]

"Our goal with the Modern Artisan project is to ensure that amazing artisans and designers at the start of their careers are empowered with the in-depth knowledge on how to design and create a collection having sustainability innovation longevity in mind, both for the collection that they will be launching with us at Net-A-Porter and Yoox next year, but also and especially for their future careers," Ms. Bertolani said.

"We want them to have the right skills to create a responsible collection that uses low impact materials and considers processes, as we're doing across all our private labels."

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