

MARKETING

Education, confidence key for women in male-dominated sectors

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Despite there still being an imbalance, more women are filling executive-level roles in male-dominated industries. Image credit: Four Seasons

By NORA HOWE

NEW YORK As consumers and employees demand more representation, the luxury industry is strategizing long-overdue changes to better support women and underrepresented groups in the workforce.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has **disproportionately impacted** how women are rising into leadership positions. During *Luxury Daily's* annual Women in Luxury eConference on June 16, *Luxury Daily's* senior staff writer Sarah Ramirez spoke with Mimi Sheng, head of bags and accessories at **Whatnot**, and Dawn Trabing, sommelier at **Four Seasons Philadelphia**, about what tools women can use to navigate certain industries.

"This industry can be very challenging because it is extremely male-dominated, especially in restaurants," Ms. Trabing said. "In the past five years, though, women are closing that gap and you will find more women in these types of roles."

Women in Luxury 2022 was produced by Luxury Daily

Empowering women

The hospitality and restaurant sector was hit massively by the collateral effects of lockdowns and health restrictions, which affected all employees' abilities to progress in their roles.

With the adverse effect on women's progress in the industry, Ms. Trabing believes she was lucky to have secured her position as a sommelier for Four Seasons during the pandemic. As a sommelier, she is surrounded by men, but at Four Seasons there are a number of women in high-level executive, decision-making roles.

"Our director of beverage courses of North America and the director of food and beverage for North America are both female, and high-level executives overseeing all properties are female, which is amazing," Ms. Trabing said.

Getting into the industry is one feat, but how one succeeds within a workplace is an entirely different obstacle.



LVMH is looking to better support its workforce during personal emergencies. Image credit: LVMH

Despite working in fashion and accessories now, Ms. Sheng came from a highly male-dominant industry working for tech companies like Uber and TikTok. When it comes to succeeding in any role she has had and being acknowledged for her work, she said it is not just about being an expert, but being able to communicate what you know with others.

"Many times, if you have been working on something specific for a while, you will likely know a lot more about that subject whatever it is, whatever your role may be than other people," she said. "It is your responsibility to explain to other people the basis of your decisions.

"In turn, this can showcase the effort and expertise you have built over time."

Acquisition is another critical element of fostering a successful yet supportive environment for women because who companies hire and how they train employees today will reflect on the business tomorrow.

"Being vocal about what you have accomplished, particularly the impact of those accomplishments, and directing someone to see how your actions lead to that is really valuable," Ms. Sheng said.

"It is important to emphasize, too, that within any company culture, results are not made by a single person alone," she said. "Accomplishments come from support through team members, so it is crucial to showcase how the team efforts come together."

Supporting diversity in the workplace

For many women, and especially women of color and those in the LGBTQ+ community, professional environments can be alienating spaces.



Cond Nast outlined objectives for a more diverse workplace. Image credit: Cond Nast

Last year, a Boston Consulting Group survey revealed that LGBTQ+ employees who do not feel comfortable in their first 12 months at a workplace are unlikely to do so ever, placing a major onus on a company to immediately create an environment in which employees feel comfortable expressing themselves, sharing their identities and ultimately feeling confident to share new ideas ([see story](#)).

To foster safe and supportive work environments for all employees, it is crucial that businesses actively support diversity, all the way from the C-suite to retail stores.

According to Cond Nast's Diversity and Inclusivity 2020 Report, only 10 percent of the company's U.S.-based senior

leadership positions are held by Asian employees and 5.5 percent are held by Black employees.

Having examined disparities in gender and racial representation throughout 2020, Cond Nast is dedicated to implementing strategies for creating a more inclusive work environment in four categories: employee diversity, leadership, content and training and benefits.

In 2020, 52 percent of new hires were represented by white employees, 11 percent Asian, 13 percent Black, 8 percent Latinx, 5 percent multiracial and less than one percent Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, according to the report ([see story](#)).

It is a company's responsibility to provide a diverse and supportive environment, but it is an employee's responsibility to deliver in their role.

"[As a woman], education, being confident in what you are doing, speaking up and staying ahead of industry trends is critical," Four Seasons' Ms. Trabing said. "People in this industry will not expect anything less, so I must deliver."

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