

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Crimson Wine Group's Jennifer Locke: Luxury Woman to Watch 2023

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Jennifer Locke

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 25 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:

Jennifer Locke
CEO

Crimson Wine Group

Napa, CA

"There is very little tolerance or room for missteps, so we are hyper-focused on brilliant execution on all aspects of commercial business and increasing our wine quality"

What do you most like about your job?

I like creating and being part of high-performing teams that galvanize around a shared mission, goal or objective.

I have worked in siloed, blame-game companies, and I much prefer working with talented, collaborative and kind coworkers, like the ones I have at Crimson.

We put the physical and mental wellness of our people first not reopening wineries unless it is safe to do so, allowing employees to work remotely as needed, et cetera.

This emphasis on wellness and collaborative culture has helped us grow our business significantly and execute major structural changes to wholesale partnerships and commercial teams during the COVID-19 era, when a lot of our competitors have lost share. And, of course, our wines.

It is an honor to steward the properties in our portfolio, and I take great pride in knowing that what we create brings

our customers joy.

Our wines are shared across family dinner tables, uncorked in Michelin-starred restaurants, carefully saved by collectors for special occasions and glasses are raised at important milestones.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

I started at Crimson two months before the COVID-19 lockdown and not long before major California wildfires impacted our team and harvest, threatening both the lives and livelihoods of our people.

As CEO, my job is to look forward and prepare for the future to focus on the organization's vision and mission.

It has been challenging to lead the team through the external pressures of the last few years, while also gearing up the company for the future.

All the change, hardships and uncertainty have helped build our resiliency, though, and made restructuring our teams and wholesale route-to-market perhaps a bit easier, or at least not as daunting, in retrospect.

I am pleased with our overall performance and am focused now on implementing our long-term strategic plan.

What is your work priority for 2023?

The number one commodity in the luxury space is time. We want our customers to feel like their time with us is well-spent and enjoyable.

To bring our unique brand identities to life, we design luxury experiences online, in stores and in-person that all share the same brand DNA and messaging.

It seems simple, but executing at a high level takes the entire team to be aligned, including our external partners.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

While the wine segment is under a fair amount of pressure from premium spirits and RTDs, the high-end, luxury wine segment is growing.

At Crimson, we are investing and repositioning our core luxury brands, and taking share from competitors in the process.

While some in our industry have stalled or retrenched, we have invested in and upgraded our tasting rooms, vineyard properties, wine quality, customer-service technology and wholesale partnerships.

I am proud of how we have leaned into our luxury brand proposition and made sure it is delivering.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2023?

In the wine space, the next 24 months will be a defining time for many brands.

Many wineries are coming off shorter vintages and significant channel swings, from off-premise to ecommerce and then to on-premise, as customers returned to restaurants and bars.

Those wineries that have strong brand affinity and reacted to the consumer's desire to channel-shift over the last two-and-a-half years should have, hopefully, built brand equity.

That was our goal at Crimson. We have taken prices in line with our categories but are carefully watching our re-order rates by channel and account.

Our more established brands, like Pine Ridge Vineyards and Seghesio Family Vineyards, tend to do very well in times of turmoil.

With inflation and uncertainty in the economy, the well-established brands that best deliver on the value proposition usually prevail.

There is very little tolerance or room for missteps, though, so we are hyper-focused on brilliant execution of all aspects of commercial business and increasing our wine quality.

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