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Prada succession plan pushes LVMH alum as next CEO, queues eldest son

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The power pair at the helm of the Italian fashion brand and family business is proposing an executive structure that supports their heir's eventual ascension as CEO. Image credit: Shutterstock

By AMIRAH KEATON

Italian fashion brand Prada is providing a rare look inside company operations, publicizing a proposed plan for next-in-line talent that includes the nomination of Italian businessman Andrea Guerra as the company's subsequent chief executive.

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Ahead of a Jan. 25 board meeting set to seal the brand's fate, the power pair at Prada's helm have made clear their intentions to define the company's future in lockstep, as they both remove themselves from their respective top posts. In time, another aspect of the family-run business' leadership structure becomes clear Mr. Guerra's CEO tenure serves, in part, to clear a path for the eventual ascension of the eldest Prada son, signaling a desire to keep the business in the family.

"If there is anything quintessentially Italian about Italian business is keeping the leadership in the family," said Thoma Serdari, author of *Rethinking Luxury Fashion* and director of fashion and luxury MBA at [NYU Stern](#), New York.

"This has both helped and challenged several Italian firms over the years as each one of them had to face growth, globalization, and the evolution of the luxury consumer," Ms. Serdari said. "In that context, the decision to choose an interim CEO until Lorenzo Bertelli takes over the family company is a well thought through and somewhat anticipated move."

Ms. Serdari is not affiliated with Prada, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Fourth generation frontrunner

It appears that Italian billionaire fashion designer Miuccia Prada and her business partner and husband, co-CEO of Prada Patrizio Bertelli have decided to define the company's future by taking a step back, marking the moment worthy of analysis.

The strategy sees the duo relinquishing their direct executive functions, instead opting to foster the family business

from its wings.

The brand's succession plan as outlined sees Mr. Bertelli transitioning into a chairman role that will oversee Prada SpA, while his wife will abdicate her shared CEO slot as well, solely maintaining her co-creative director title currently executed in tandem with designer Raf Simons.

Ms. Prada and Mr. Bertelli are also seeking to elevate current chairman Paolo Zannoni to an executive deputy chairman position for Prada SpA's board of directors. At the same time, Mr. Zannoni would take on the title of Prada Holding SpA chairman – the entity counts Jil Sander and Helmut Lang among its subsidiaries.

In lieu of and according to the brand, and equipped with decades of executive experience, Andrea Guerra intends to fill the empty chief executive officer slot.



Prada co-CEOs will nominate Andrea Guerra as incoming chief executive officer. Image credit: Fashion Magazine

Mr. Guerra's primarily hospitality-focused career began at Marriott Italia. He would eventually rise to serve as Director of Marketing there, before moving to then-Italian manufacturer Merloni Elettrodomestici jumping across sales, production and central services leadership roles.

The former titles would predate his first explicit assignment to the luxury category. As CEO of Italian eyewear company Luxxotica, a role held for a decade, Mr. Guerra tripled company sales in the period between 2003 and 2013 from roughly \$2.9 billion to \$7 billion, according to annual reports.

"Luxury intelligence is about delighting and elevating the client's experience with the brand," said **Marilisa Barbieri**, a New York-based business consultant and luxury brand expert.

"And hospitality is all about the ability to draw the five senses and aesthetic judgment in day-to-day operations," Ms. Barbieri said. "Mr. Guerra, with his long career in the service industry and business acumen, will serve well during this interim and add to the luxury company's value."

Ms. Barbieri is not affiliated with Prada, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Mr. Guerra was named chairman of Eataly, a high-quality Italian food marketplace comprised of restaurants, food and beverage counters, bakery, retail items, a cooking school and frequent events, in September 2015.

Most recently, he headed up LVMH's Hospitality Excellence division from 2020 to 2022, where the leader still maintains an advisory role as a strategy and development consultant to its managing parties.

His selection as CEO suggests an interest in a new business perspective on Prada's behalf.

"Luxury retail is becoming more and more experiential by the minute," NYU's Ms. Serdari said.



A Prada location in China. Image courtesy of

"Mr. Guerra will serve the company well with his experience as an executive in the hospitality sector," she said. "Prada has invested heavily in bringing food retail into the brand and they have been pioneers in redefining retail since the 1990s."

"As young consumers expect to consume something other than merely a luxury object with every immersion in their favorite luxury brand, Prada will be well-positioned to expand into experiences that bridge retail and hospitality."

Experts suggest the move could also mark an effort to expand into adjacent categories.

"Additionally, let's not forget that there is a global contraction in terms of production and consumption of fashion in general especially as the industry is trying to address issues of sustainability," Ms. Serdari said.

"An established brand like Prada that has already successfully created immersive experiences for its customer base could naturally seek to expand in the realm of luxury hospitality," she said. "Are Prada hotels the next big thing?"

A new executive era

With this announcement comes the recognition that Mr. Guerra's nomination rests on the evident premise of an eventual transfer of power to Lorenzo Bertelli, son of Mr. Bertelli and Ms. Prada, who is currently the head of marketing and communications at Prada Group, overseeing digital marketing and sustainability ([see story](#)).

Mr. Guerra is said to be making way for the heir, training the young business mind on all aspects of "steady and sustainable growth," as listed in a brand statement from the current co-CEOs. The family's succession structure is fairly unique.

"There is a delicate balance between the uniqueness of Prada, a family business, and all the critical factors in long-term success, including leadership," Ms. Barbieri said.

"Smooth executive transitions and governance during and after a family company leadership change are key."

The announcement still leaves many questions regarding what is to come of the astonishing era of creative control experienced under the founder's direct descendant.

Rumors regarding Ms. Prada's future swirled with news of co-creative director Raf Simons' decision to downsize personal business pursuits, insinuating the move as some sort of preparation for possible changes to his current co-creative director title, to cover for an upcoming shift in Ms. Prada's capacity. His eponymous label ceased operations in November ([see story](#)).

For now, Prada moves forward in its vision, as its workforce awaits the day that the executive reins will be handed over to the next generation once more, as bestowed upon Ms. Prada herself some two score years ago.

"The role of CEO is not one which an heir can successfully assume without relevant expertise," Ms. Serdari said.

"Having an outsider come in and confirm that the right structures are in place will serve Lorenzo Bertelli well, if this is indeed his future."