

IN-STORE

Bloomingdale's loses brand leader, gains opportunity for fresh voice

June 7, 2013



By ERIN SHEA

The retirement of department store chain Bloomingdale's vice president of fashion direction may come as a loss for the retailer, but creates an opportunity for it to fill the position and find a new voice for itself.

[Sign up now](#)

Luxury Daily

After 29 years at Bloomingdale's, it was announced June 6 that Stephanie Solomon is retiring from her career at Bloomingdale's today. This transition will allow the retail brand to decide where it wants to be in the future and use her replacement to help get it there.

"The retailer needs to think about what they are going to do to help exemplify the brand," said Steven Fischer, lecturer of image, style and design at [Northwestern University](#), Evanston, IL.

"Bloomingdale's has a really great opportunity of deciding how it wishes to be perceived by its customers," he said.

"[The retailer must] search for another person to fill her role and then reach their core customer."

Mr. Fischer is not affiliated with Bloomingdale's, but agreed to comment as an industry

expert.

Bloomingdale's declined to comment.

Saying goodbye

Bloomingdale's has not released much information about Ms. Solomon's retirement, but it did confirm that she has officially retired and released a company statement.

"We wish her all the best and thank her for her many years of service to our brand," said the retailer in the statement.

Bloomingdale's has not yet chosen a successor, per **WWD**.



*Ms. Solomon (Image from **Zimbio**)*

However, this does not leave Bloomingdale's at a loss since this gives it the opportunity to revamp its voice.

"This means it is an opportunity for a new vision and voice to influence the retailer's future direction," said Rony Zeidan, president and creative director of **RO New York**.

“People, in general, get affected with the departure of important individuals in a corporation, and for the most part, the effect is not a negative one,” he said.

“I doubt Bloomingdale's will be heavily affected by Ms. Solomon's departure.”

Also, Ms. Solomon's retirement may not likely to sway the Bloomingdale's customer one way or another.

“From a consumer perspective, it has no difference, as consumers are not privy to the inner structures of retailers,” Mr. Zeidan said.

“Bloomingdale's customers won't be affected by the departure of Ms. Solomon unless the product assortment and the core identity of the retailer changes once a new appointed individual is selected and they have a different vision than Ms. Solomon did,” he said.

Brand icons

Ms. Solomon and others in similar positions can be compared to having the same role as fashion designers and celebrity brand ambassadors. These influential roles can dictate the voice of a brand.

“Within the industry, big figures such as Ms. Solomon and [Bergdorf Goodman's] Linda Fargo are essential public figures of the companies they work for,” Mr. Zeidan said. “They represent the vision and aesthetic of the retailers and have a lot of pull when it comes to brand selections and trend vision.”

Recently, certain fashion designers have been moving into the spotlight by showing off other talents.

Fashion designer and CFDA president Diane von Furstenberg could possibly extend her brand's exposure with a new advice column on New York magazine's fashion site The Cut.

Likewise, many other designers such as Marc Jacobs and Karl Lagerfeld have entered into the spotlight for talents besides fashion, but only certain efforts may extend a brand's reach ([see story](#)).

Since consumers seem to want access to these influencers, brands should realize the importance this role can play in shaping the voice and vision of the brand.

“Most successful retailers they have a clearly identifiable person who embodies the story of the brand,” Northwestern University's Mr. Fischer said.

“They provide this wonderful aspiration for what a consumer can be,” he said. “We need that spokesperson there.”

Final take

Erin Shea, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: http://www.youtube.com/embed/a_mdB6G29OA

© Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your **feedback** is welcome.