

INTERNET

Digital growth propelled by corporate understanding of ecommerce: panel

September 25, 2013



By JEN KING

NEW YORK - Senior executives from Ivanka Trump, El Palacio de Hierro, Shiseido and NARS at the Luxury Interactive 2013 conference said that digital growth stems from the rapport and quality of corporate staff.

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Each executive touched upon their brand's staffing challenges in response to digital growth in the "Addressing Your Staffing Challenges in a Digitally Optimized Environment" panel discussion. Brands looking to explore digital options need to start from the ground-up with a behind-the-scenes team that has a wide range of knowledge.

"Ideal hires are people with a broad background," said Jeanette Garner, vice president of ecommerce at **Shiseido** and **NARS**, New York.

"When building a team, I look for people who have operational and marketing backgrounds as well as a retail background," she said.

"An ideal hire needs an ecommerce base and understanding."

Challenge accepted

The behind-the-scenes staff of a brand or retailer is just as important as the sales team found in-store.

A knowledgeable team well-versed in digital strategy as well as marketing will be a vital aspect of expanding a brand's digital presence.

Similar to sales teams, brands should look to hire a digital and ecommerce staff for value rather than profit opportunity.



Panel speakers Ms. Garner, Mr. Okrent and Ms. Murphy with moderator George Popstefanov, founder and CEO of PMG

All panel members agreed that a lean team with a broad background guide success.

“This is where the world is going, mobile has changed the world and ecommerce is where the world is heading,” said Johanna Murphy, chief marketing officer of **Ivanka Trump**, New York.

“The size of the team reflects sales and the brand's investment in ecommerce,” she said.

Previously, brands tended to choose between a digital marketer and a retail marketer. The rise of ecommerce has altered this business model to the point where staff members need to be knowledgeable of both areas.

Think like a retailer

Brands that are staffing for a digital environment should approach the challenges from a retailer's perspective.

A retailer's sales team is meant to understand the products and create an engaging environment as consumers shop. The panel suggested that brands choose a team that understands the technology behind ecommerce to create an engaging digital environment for consumers to enjoy.

To succeed in retail, the team behind-the-scenes must also be skilled marketers.

Ecommerce and mobile continue to change the marketplace and brands slow to catch on are likely to fail.

For example, department stores Nordstrom and Saks Fifth Avenue are ranked as the most digitally progressive retailers because of their large size and ecommerce options, according to a report from L2 Think Tank.

The “Digital IQ Index: Department Stores 2013” examines the digital competence of global department stores and finds that the larger the store, the more effective its digital strategies. With U.S. department store sales expected to decline 12 percent in 2013 and European department stores leashed to an expected 1.3 percent growth through 2015, the clarion call for enhancing digital tactics is urgent ([see story](#)).

Retailers can achieve ecommerce and digital success through the content provided to followers on social media.

Mexican department store chain El Palacio de Hierro positions its social media presence through branded collaborations, with its own photography studio, to maintain consistency in storytelling, per Dario Okrent, director of ecommerce at [El Palacio de Hierro](#), Mexico City, Mexico.



Mexican retailer El Palacio de Hierro

Furthermore, the success of a brand’s ecommerce and digital presence relies on the capabilities of its corporate staff.

“A lot of it is about educating senior management, they might not understand why you need a digital team but explain the core functions of ecommerce, Shiseido and NARS’ Ms. Garner said.

“Make sure they understand that this is a ‘store’ and you need a staff of people, you need to staff appropriately otherwise the lights will go out, she said.

“Build your case beyond the immediate future and look ahead three, five years because the world is going to become digital very quickly.”

Final Take

Jen King, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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