

COMMERCE

Ralph Lauren centralizes luxury business with new hire

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By SARAH JONES

U.S. apparel brand Ralph Lauren has created a new position, president of Ralph Lauren Luxury Collections, to oversee the global expansion of its luxury business.

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The brand hired Valérie Hermann, the former CEO of French label Saint Laurent Paris and handbag brand Reed Krakoff, to the new role, which she will begin April 7. With this new hire, Ralph Lauren is able to centralize the strategy for all of its luxury portfolio, as well as focus on growing its luxury brands.

"Ralph Lauren has always been a luxury brand," said James Dean, vice president and head of the luxury practice at [WealthEngine](#), Bethesda, MD. "The creation of this position

suggests a greater commitment to their luxury goods and the people that buy them.

"Ralph Lauren is certainly well position to expand its luxury brands leveraging its existing loyal customers to drive revenue growth," he said. "The affluent and high net worth consumer has always had a great appetite for Ralph Lauren products, and Ms. Hermann's hire is likely a move to ensure Ralph Lauren continues to serve this market well."

Mr. Dean is not affiliated with Ralph Lauren, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Ralph Lauren declined to comment directly.

Luxury focus

This new role will oversee the strategy, merchandising and distribution of Ralph Lauren's luxury businesses. Included under the luxury umbrella are the men's and women's Collection brands, RRL, timepieces, fine jewelry, eyewear and fragrance.



Illustration of Ralph Lauren's Stirrup watch

Ms. Hermann will report directly to Ralph Lauren, the chairman and CEO of the company, joining Jackwyn Nemerov, the president and COO of Ralph Lauren.

Prior to joining the Ralph Lauren team, Ms. Hermann was the CEO of Reed Krakoff, a

position she took on after a six-year term as CEO of Yves Saint Laurent. Earlier, she had worked in different capacities for LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, including time as the director of women's ready-to-wear at Dior.

In a branded statement, Mr. Lauren said that he respected Ms. Hermann's ability to combine the creative and commercial sides of luxury. He also referenced her work with European fashion houses as a reason for her hire, and mentioned that she will accelerate the growth of the company's portfolio of luxury brands.

This new position and hire comes only a week after Ralph Lauren's announcement of its hire of Denise Incandela as its president of global digital and global ecommerce. Ms. Incandela was the former CMO of Saks Fifth Avenue, and also brings luxury experience to the brand.

Mixing things up

Other luxury brands have added roles to deal with the changing landscape of marketing.

For instance, Canadian retail conglomerate Hudson's Bay Company tapped the former president of Saks.com to oversee digital marketing for all of its retail brands.

The new HBC Digital group, headed by Michael Burgess, will consist of experts who will create the ecommerce and marketing strategy for the group, applying best practices and sharing knowledge across the brands. Each of the retail chains under the HBC umbrella, including department store chain Saks Fifth Avenue, will benefit from shared knowledge, since the approach raises the ROI on digital marketing spend ([see story](#)).

Like HBC's new digital position did for the marketing of all of its umbrella retail chains, this move by Ralph Lauren will unite the strategy of all of the Ralph Lauren luxury labels, ensuring their cohesion.

Ralph Lauren has previously shown its dedication to a luxury audience.

The brand showed its commitment to restoring historic Paris arts school École des Beaux-Arts by staging its first runway show Oct. 8 outside the United States at the venue.

Ralph Lauren's restoration project gives brand enthusiasts a glimpse of what is important to the label in a way that diverges from normal fashion-focused initiatives. Collaborations that protect historical places or objects resonate with culturally-inclined consumers ([see story](#)).

This new hire for Ralph Lauren might boost their luxury brands.

"Ralph Lauren's luxury collections may gain even further exposure with the hire of Ms. Hermann and I believe you'll see this in their future advertising, marketing and in the luxury products they offer," Mr. Dean said.

Final Take

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