

CLASSIC GUIDES

Introducing Luxury Women to Watch 2021

September 14, 2020



Much to celebrate for strides women have made: Piaget watches and jewels. Image credit: Piaget

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 26 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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The Luxury Women to Watch 2021 roster includes executives from brands, retailers, agencies and design firms, among others. Please read through their responses below to get a sense of their 2021 strategy.

Judging process

Picking the 26 smartest women this year with potential was not easy. Readers were [invited to send](#) in their nominations. The *Luxury Daily* team also had its own table of candidates.

Once the deadline expired, the *Luxury Daily* team judged the nominees on their merits and whittled the list to those who showed the most promise to push the luxury envelope in 2021.

All judging was based purely on merit and potential to make a difference.

Many thanks as well to those readers who took the time to nominate candidates.

Please read this report from first entry to last, listed alphabetically by honoree's last name. These Luxury Women to Watch are set to distinguish themselves even further in 2021, and raise standards even higher in the luxury business.

Mickey Alam Khan, editor in chief, *Luxury Daily*

LUXURY WOMEN TO WATCH 2021



Shauna Brook

Shauna Brook, founder/CEO, [Shauna Brook Marketing & Communications](#), New York

"Luxury has always been about the highest-quality product in tandem with creating emotional connections with customers"

What do you most like about your job?

The luxury industry is very dynamic.

I have been fortunate to work with great global brands to help identify their brand DNA and to tell their story to new and existing customers.

It is exciting to use various marketing and communications channels to tell the brand story in different ways, whether through creating dynamic content and digital outreach or through high-touch bespoke experiences curated for the luxury consumer.

My role leading marketing and communications allows for great diversity and covers a wide range of topics. These include philanthropic work, editorial, VIP and content creation, incorporating digital technology to connect with various audiences via CRM to deliver exceptional customer experiences through personalization or hosting unique events or experiences to continually connect with customers bringing the brand to life in exciting ways.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

Retail is in a very interesting and challenging moment. When you represent a brand you must deliver each time to the customer on every detail, so a challenge is always meeting the evolving expectations of the luxury consumer.

Brands need to deliver the best possible experience on all fronts, consistently across all consumer touch points, and this takes coordination and commitment. This is a challenge, but also represents a great opportunity to continually delight your customer and strengthen the relationship.

Customers want to feel a deeper connection to a brand rather than just buying product at a store or online.

Luxury consumers are more sophisticated than ever, with greater knowledge of the brands they are interested in and often they have researched a brand or discussed it with peers.

Identifying what element of the product offering or story will appeal to various customers can help establish long-term loyalty and engage with the brand vision and the community which can be very powerful.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

The public health crisis has significantly changed the landscape, causing major shifts in behavioral trends including parts of the retail experience that we used to take for granted. Some of these may be temporary, while others will be permanent.

Customer communication is always a top priority, striking the right tone and cadence, but now it is critical to truly know your customers and what their needs may be, given a new work situation or changing priorities.

The nuance of brand voice is more important than ever, and brands need to prioritize transparency and empathy with customers.

Additionally, the current crisis was a moment where many brands were able to pivot and use their resources for the purpose of good, like using factories to make protective gear or providing medical or economic aid etc.

This type of authenticity towards the community means a lot to all customers and it is a moment for brands to give

back and have a true human connection rather than focus on purely commercial initiatives.

Moving forward, brands will need to be more agile than ever to understand the social climate and respond to these circumstances appropriately and with empathy.

What is your work priority for 2021?

The number one priority should be to focus on clients and be more consumer-centric than ever.

Using data has always been essential to understanding the customer connection and brand preferences to properly serve the clients. Now brands will want to focus these initiatives to have the most impactful customer interactions.

With that said, while it is important to use and understand the data, storytelling is also where the magic is for luxury brands that have rich and interesting stories and, in some cases historic, this will be a powerful tool to focus on as we rebuild brand to consumer relationships.

Also, marketers have to be in tune with what makes people tick and ensure that the brand messaging is not tone deaf and connects with the customer in the right way.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

There are so many proud moments after years in the luxury industry, so it is hard for me to pick just one.

There have been many noteworthy achievements at all the brands I have worked for in my time.

The one constant that I am proud of is the incredible teams I have been able to build domestically and globally at Giorgio Armani, David Yurman and Ermenegildo Zegna.

Each brand has their own DNA and strategic priorities, and bringing together a dynamic group of individuals who all work in tandem to achieve that goal is really inspiring.

One thing that will never change is that people help shape and make a great brand experience, so to always build world-class teams is an achievement I am proud of.

Many people from my various teams have become lifelong friends and I have formed strong professional and personal relationships with them.

Also, a key element of luxury is strategic partnerships with other brands, influencers, hotel groups, auction houses, automotive or private aviation companies to extend the brand voice and create unique product, content or experiences.

I am really proud of the many partnerships I have brought, such as working with top athletes by extending the relationship from just a brand campaign to experiential events and more intimate bespoke experiences with the athlete and top clients.

Establish partnerships with various chefs who use the history and brand identity to create an exclusive meal or working with an artist or museum to create an installation using the brands themes.

These are some of the creative ways to continue to tell the magic of a storied brand in a modern way and continually engage consumers in their various passion points.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

I think 2021 will be a continuation and acceleration of some of the key trends we have already seen developing.

There will continue to be a focus on a more casual lifestyle element for apparel brands as well as a focus on digital messaging and communication, brand sustainability and developing the local domestic customer.

Luxury brands will have to adapt to operating in different ways. Whether that be through changing how new collections are presented, utilizing popup shops, expanding and promoting services such as different modes of shopping, product delivery, pick-up and other exchanges between the customer and the brand.

Luxury has always been about the highest-quality product in tandem with creating emotional connections with customers. Luxury brands will have to continue to use both traditional methods as well as capitalizing on new trends that have emerged or advancements in technology to continue to refine the brand experience.

Overall, marketers will need to adopt a new mindset and focus their brands to connect and be relevant to consumers.

Luxury customers will remember the brands who are particularly responsive to the crisis.

Marketers can tap into elements of their brand that are relevant to the present situation to have a positive impact on current clients and the customer base, as a whole.



Susan Brunstrum

Susan Brunstrum, founder/principal, [Studio Brunstrum](#), Chicago

"High-value purchases will be less of a signal of status and more of a confirmation of values"

What do you most like about your job?

As an interior designer serving high-net-worth families, most people think my job is all about beauty and aesthetics. It's not.

Creativity, scale, sophistication and good taste are a given. As has been made clear in 2020 with the public health crisis, our homes represent our most important investment: our family's personal wellness.

It gives me great joy to be a diplomatic "connector of dots" and an intuitive problem solver, but the vision to ensure the wellbeing of my clients living in their home comes first.

My focus is on the human experience: how we live, function and interact in our homes. It is not about how a home looks, but how it feels that is of the most importance to me.

I love that our inside-out, heart-centered approach lets me invest in those living there.

What is your biggest challenge at work?

Allotting time for blue-sky thinking, strategic planning and product development, while balancing current client projects and new business development on a weekly basis.

The silver lining of the pandemic? It gave me an opportunity to re-think, re-calibrate, re-analyze and reset my life goals, both personally and professionally.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

Interior design is a very personal business based on mutual trust, respect and communication.

Over the past 18 years, most of our clientele have come from personal relationships and referrals.

I can only see that method of business development increasing in light of the pandemic.

Some of our procedures have changed we can do more virtually than in-person and, of course, we follow the mandated health guidelines but our culture, DNA and core values have remained the same.

What is your work priority for 2021?

We are expanding Studio Brunstrum Home by launching our first line of accessories to complement our line of custom rugs.

We've also been very fortunate. Our clients are well positioned financially to withstand the impact of COVID-19, so we're projecting the same level of collaboration with our current and similar clientele in 2021 and beyond.

On a personal note, I'd like to get involved with a not-for-profit organization to assist others.

The pandemic has only further illuminated the growing disparities throughout the United States, so I'd like to find a way to apply my expertise to create a safe and healthy home for everyone.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

The awards from industry peers and accolades from magazines are nice. But what really matters is hearing a client walk in the door and say "Ahh, I'm home." Then I know I've served my client and they've received the luxury they retained me to provide.

We recently completed a turnkey, complete renovation in Chicago's Gold Coast and were then asked to continue collaborating on the couple's primary home in the suburbs.

To me, trust is the foundation of luxury, so knowing that we've developed a relationship with a client that continues beyond the initial project is always a proud moment.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

High-value purchases will be less of a signal of status and more of a confirmation of values.

Acquiring material possessions just because you have the capacity to do so will be perceived as inappropriate and uncaring, as there continues to be more disparity in the world.

Conspicuous consumption or blatant consumerism will be out.

We will only purchase from and collaborate with those that are socially, morally and ethically responsible.

As we are all part of a bigger whole and each person is as equally important as the next, servicing people's essential needs, and giving back will be in.



Czarrah Cabrera

Czarrah Cabrera, director of brand management, [Harry Kotlar](#), Los Angeles

"It is hard when you want the best and be different in this new era of digital"

What do you most like about your job?

The endless possibilities I could potentially create.

I love the fact that I am given the creative rein and license to think big, explore and innovate game-changing strategies, initiatives and products that break through a clutter of sameness in a world that I grew up in the jewelry industry.

I have always been passionate about luxury since I was a kid. The myriad of art and history imbued in each piece, be it shoes, clothing, artwork, music, travel, cuisine and jewelry, just leaves me in awe and deeply inspired.

This is how I began my obsession to cultural theory, art and human societies that inspired me to create, initiate and view things with an anthropologist's lens.

Harry Kotlar has been in business for seven decades and I am fortunate to be given the opportunity to be able to articulate its breadth of history, the undeniable romance of the genesis of our handmade masterpieces, our master artisans' unwavering attention to details and emotional intensities, as well as merging all these dialogues with various forms of art, culture, world history in several different channels and approaches.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

There are a few challenges in my work. That is an understatement.

The biggest challenge for me would be balancing ambition for growth, impossibly high standards, passion to excel and budget limitations with the inner-knowledge that high-quality work and product takes a lot of time, money,

sacrifice and effort.

It is hard when you want the best and be different in this new era of digital.

The amount of work that must be created for any brand is tremendous to ensure a brand's success. And on top of that, we must all be obsessively focusing on delivering the best-quality experiences, products and services that exceed our audiences' and consumers' expectations while ensuring the consistency of our luxury positioning on every touch point.

In luxury, we cannot be reeling in mediocrity.

It takes a lot of patience and sometimes I wish I could clone myself so I could do more, but I believe in taking it one stride at a time and having a strong point of view. Slowly but surely, focusing on exploring and navigating untapped spaces and ideas that will illuminate our difference as a brand within a very traditional industry with lots of other brand heavyweights.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

I can say that I've adapted quite OK with the new order of things, but it wasn't such an easy journey.

At first, there was, of course, a feeling of uncertainty because this pandemic poses a great threat to our independent jewelry retailers' business, consumers' spending power, employment, financial markets, GDP and the whole economy, which, in turn, decreases profits and sales, consumer confidence and willingness to spend on fine jewelry.

There's also that fear-of-contagion factor that drives all of these.

I am just grateful that I work with a smaller team, which is to an advantage because we can make much faster decisions.

To that note, we were able to regroup and plan our short-term arrangements and actions as well as our long-term deliberations for shaping what's ahead.

The brand's first priority was to protect the well-being of our employees, partners and clients through closure of our corporate offices, design studios and production spaces, supporting our exclusive retailers wherever possible as well as financially support nonprofit organizations that continuously help and support families impacted by COVID-19.

The pandemic forced us to embrace the digital world even further video conferencing, cloud-based collaborations, telecommuting, ecommerce and omnichannel retailing which, in turn, technically saves us money, increases efficiency and reduces our carbon footprint.

I believe in the power of positivity, so instead of dwelling on the negativity of a crisis, I put my creative hat on to see things differently: to thrive and not just survive.

Fighting that human instinct to be negative will enable and empower us to gain a competitive advantage in constructing a creative solution to conquer a problem or a difficult one.

Diving deeper into our creativity will allow us to solve problems that people will say are unsolvable and impossible.

Creativity envisions the world as how it can be and not as it is. Thus, I believe that this is an opportunity for independent brands like us to flourish with the right playbook.

What is your work priority for 2021?

Our work priorities for the rest of the year and 2021 anticipate to respond to what would be that next normal be and evolve.

These are:

- Foster a supportive and creative mindset and culture within our teams
- Reallocate investments on non-converting marketing and PR initiatives and media to digital and online channels
- Continue to reimagine our consumer facing Web site, Facebook Shop, IG shop and B2B platforms and online retail partnerships with the aim for greater customer intimacy as consumers shift to digital shopping
- Exploration of alternative ways to deliver the Kotlar Luxury Experience's magic through potential virtual

experiences and outside-the-box bespoke initiatives to enhance our client's journey and deepen their connection to Harry Kotlar

- Support and work with our exclusive independent jewelry retailers and Harry Kotlar exclusive boutiques in curating their product assortment and consumer experiences, both online and offline. The faster we can pivot together, we can adapt and turn challenges into great opportunities
- A more focused, curated and sustainable new collection for 2021
- Maintain our stance on ethical sourcing for natural diamonds and continue to consistently weave our brand's soul and story into all our initiatives

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

I have worked with other luxury brands before, but I think my proudest achievement in luxury is rethinking and revamping Harry Kotlar as a brand from scratch almost seven years ago with an intern and a humble budget to start.

From defining its soul and story, streamlining its collections and merchandise, revamping its B2B and B2C digital and omnichannel capabilities, to activating celebrity and influencer placements, national/international editorial placements in digital and print publications to establishing exclusive Harry Kotlar boutiques, crafting and producing unique, immersive and multi-sensory Kotlar luxury events within local Harry Kotlar exclusive retail partners to directing and producing short films, musical score, museum apps, ad campaigns and coffee table books.

It has been quite a journey. It's not easy, but I took that challenge and I told myself I'd give my all and passion into this and see where I go with it and here we are now.

The most satisfying above all lies within the achievement of our revenue growth, expansion of our distribution, successful bespoke initiatives, audiences that were inspired, strong relationships we have built with our network of retailers and consumers as well as the faith they had in us over the past few years.

The icing on the cake is to have top A-list celebrities and tastemakers wear our pieces on the red carpet, such as Celine Dion, Michelle Obama, Matt Damon, Cate Blanchett, Rihanna, Jennifer Lopez and Carrie Underwood, to name a few.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

COVID-19 has definitely affected the world economy and, in turn, disrupted the whole luxury sector.

Due to this, there will be an accelerated shift to digitalization, which means raising our game in online assortment, digital commerce, virtual experiences, personalized content and digital marketing without compromising the personalization quotient and personal touch of the consumer's journey, both online and offline, as well as the brand's core values that truly make it an ultimate luxury brand: authenticity, limited, craftsmanship, quality, heritage, pedigree and, now more than ever, sustainability.

As consumers become more socially conscious and desire a more responsible consumption, we should all expect luxury brands to be more transparent with their ethical processes and products with new or improved brand narratives.

We should expect a more focused and concise product offering, leaning towards something attainable yet still classic.

Although there's a current accelerated shift to online shopping, once the consumers feel safe again they will travel once more as well as return to the brick-and-mortar stores with a renewed spirit for real-life experiences and a potential shift toward "subtle luxury," paying attention to the classic elements of luxury: craftsmanship, heritage and subdued classic pieces.

The lessons that we learn during the pandemic days of 2020 can empower us to have a sustainable and balanced recovery in 2021.



Camilla Carboni

Camilla Carboni, luxury brand copywriter, Denver, CO

"As digital optimization takes center stage, automation will further highlight the need for personalization"

What do you most like about your job?

The honor of working closely with global clientele in various categories of the luxury industry, to bring their vision and brand to life through words.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

As these unprecedented times accelerate the shift toward digital consumerism, the luxury industry, as a whole, faces new challenges.

Luxury brands are navigating digital waters and working to reaffirm trust, nurture client relationships and reestablish brand presence, while simultaneously streamlining processes and integrating automated technologies, such as artificial intelligence.

As a direct result of this evolution, changed narratives are necessary narratives that continue to foster personalization and promote brand loyalty, while adapting to the needs of the times.

My role as a luxury brand copywriter is central to this transformation and it presents a very exciting challenge, both for now, and for the foreseeable future.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

I am most grateful that, due to my line of work, my day-to-day has been largely unaffected. Unfortunately, that has not been the case for the majority of my clientele.

To cater to the needs of today, I am assisting my clientele in revising their messaging in order to remain current, relevant and respectful of the times.

I am also offering copywriting support to luxury brands who are so generously supporting others.

What is your work priority for 2021?

I believe that the changing landscape will require new, thoughtful ways of communicating and I look forward to continuing to curate copywriting for luxury brands who are embracing change, and consciously rethinking their communication strategies.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

Aside from the tremendous honor of being nominated for this list by an incredible client, and featured alongside women of such caliber, I am proud to be a trusted copywriter in the luxury industry, a member of the Global Luxury Expert Network, and a "Leader in Luxury + Design" at The Home Trust International, enabling me to provide my clientele with the industry insights and connections necessary for their businesses to thrive.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

The future is digital.

As digital optimization takes center stage, automation will further highlight the need for personalization, brand trust and brand loyalty, and luxury brands will need to view their communication strategies through a new lens.

I am excited to be a part of the curation of changing narratives and eager to watch as the luxury brands who step up to this challenge pave the way for the next generation of luxury.



Amanda Cunningham

Amanda Cunningham, design director, **Room Resolutions**, Las Vegas, NV

"Luxury service is knowing what the outcome needs to be, even if the client hasn't said it"

What do you most like about your job?

I'm responsible for the client journey for our privileged clients. It begins with communicating how our brand is uniquely qualified to serve them. Then throughout the process, we provide a global perspective.

It's the gratitude our clients express for our process, our attention to granular detail, and immense respect for our designs that I most value. Nothing means more than being told, "This is my favorite home."

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

A challenging task in my job that I love to tackle and conquer is the expediting of items from custom sofas and draperies to specialty food and beverage.

Balancing the schedule and shipping is a big task to manage and I take pride in making "magic" happen.

This ever-present challenge is consistent with our core values and I assume is the same across all luxury products. It's one of the reasons why we consider ourselves to be in the luxury space rather than design.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

Serving the affluent means getting things done regardless of issues, or, as you call it, the new order of things.

Most of our clients own multiple homes, businesses and yachts, and are always on the move. We've been communicating and designing virtually for many years.

What is your work priority for 2021?

I am originally from Hawaii and a piece of my heart is always with the islands. Many of our clients live on the islands or have second homes there.

Our global aesthetic and way of doing business is appreciated by sophisticated clientele, regardless of where their property is located. I'd like to see us grow our design presence on the islands.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

We pride ourselves in the trust and appreciation we receive from our clients.

It's our responsibility to ensure every client is served in a way they've likely never experienced at home.

We are intuitive and proactive. We understand what each client wants and desires, most times without them even having to say it.

Luxury service is knowing what the outcome needs to be, even if the client hasn't said it.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

Luxury evolves by elevating standards with invisible service. It's about being more innovative while making each client's home uniquely theirs, at the same time ensuring it is more comfortable and effortless for living.

For us it's also about reinforcing sophistication, grace and our other non-negotiable standards.

We often continue to take responsibility for the property long after we've delivered our product.

In short, luxury will become more relationship driven, intuitive, transparent, values and marketing driven.



Sarah Curtis

Sarah Curtis, cofounder, **POP Communications**, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

"Our biggest challenge, especially during these times, is new business"

What do you most like about your job?

As the cofounder of a successful boutique communications agency, what I love most about my job is that it's not really a job. This is our business, our baby, and going to work every day is another day spent growing our business for bigger and better things.

I also love that I get to spend every day working alongside my best friend [Zainab Alhassan], who is my business partner.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

Our biggest challenge, especially during these times, is new business.

We spend a lot of time having to convince or sell our services heavily, even for those leads that approach us.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

We have adapted by adjusting our clients' campaigns to be relevant and sensitive.

More than ever, we have to be ready to change and flip strategies for our clients overnight, if needed.

We have also used this time to spend on our own company branding and strategy.

What is your work priority for 2021?

For 2021, our priority is to grow our client portfolio across all sectors and strengthen and develop our other products, which are powered by POP Communications.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

One of my favorite events and campaigns I have worked on was launching the Dolce & Gabbana collaboration with SMEG.

We revealed the one-of-a-kind handpainted SMEG D&G fridge in a VIP setting in front of media and influencers here in Dubai.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

The luxury market is ever evolving across all sectors.

In 2021 I see luxury brands continuing to evolve to fit with their consumers beliefs.

The last six months has shaken the world and a lot of matters that have needed to be addressed for years are now conversation topics at many tables and I feel this will reflect in communications, products and services in the future for luxury brands.



Geraldine Dobby

Geraldine Dobby, general manager, [Hotel Barriere Le Fouquet's Paris](#), Paris

"We strive to provide our guests with something they can't find at home"

What do you most like about your job?

I love that my job is all about connecting with people, be it the guests or our team.

I equate hotel management to running a small community, because you're interacting with so many different talented people, all with their own unique roles in order to execute perfect guest service.

In order for a luxury hotel to operate seamlessly, it is essential to connect each department so that they all work together and with one common goal.

Each day presents its different challenges, be it related to strategy, maintenance, marketing or the kitchens, and the great thing about my job is the variety and the team spirit that I encounter each and every day to make that seamless experience a reality.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

I've been in the hospitality industry for quite some time mostly working in urban hotels.

Things have always moved fast, but it feels like the world is moving faster than ever now and trends are changing much more rapidly.

With this in mind, the luxury hotel industry needs to nimbly cater to the expectations of guests from both emerging and mature markets.

One of our biggest challenges is keeping up with the luxuries our high-net-worth guests already have access to.

We strive to provide our guests with something they can't find at home. This means we're continuously anticipating the next trend or thinking two steps ahead for our clients.

To do this, we take guest feedback extremely seriously.

We also keep an eye on competitors and what the luxury hospitality markets are offering all around the world.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

Our first order of business was to ensure we had revised health and safety procedures in place to protect our guests and employees against this new risk and that these protocols were communicated effectively in both front and back of house.

We then wanted to make these adaptations as easy on guests as possible.

For instance, we always have masks available for guests who arrive at the hotel or restaurant and are in need of one.

Making things seamless is a part of the luxury experience, and it's our responsibility to go the extra step.

Beyond updated safety measures, our historic restaurant, Le Fouquet's, launched home and office meal delivery for the first time in the restaurant's 120-year history.

We received an incredible response from the local market, with a steady stream of orders every day.

We're proud that we've been able to deliver a high quality of cuisine, while packaging it for home and office dining.

What is your work priority for 2021?

I have three priorities for 2021:

- Be ready to welcome back international travelers, and to reassure them that they will have a safe and secure stay without sacrificing their luxury experience.
- Further develop and enhance our food and beverage program. We've received such a great response with our home and office delivery thus far, and as more Parisians return to work, the more opportunity there will be for us to expand our Fouquet's delivery service. Moreover, in order to answer to new customer's expectations, we have decided to develop a new concept for our hotel restaurant Le Joy by utilizing only French-sourced ingredients. Proposing a contemporary menu and working exclusively with French producers for all ingredients even spices presents a huge challenge for our chefs and we are proud to be the first Parisian hotel to take on this project.
- Focus on our French clientele. We've always been fortunate to have a strong client base, and we want to further embrace that moving into 2021, especially as they've been so supportive of us during the pandemic.

As the only French-owned luxury hotel in Paris, we want to continue to set the example of what French hospitality is and be a respite for our local visitors.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

I'm so proud to run Le Fouquet's and carry this torch for the Barrire family.

There is so much history here: the restaurant is 120 years old and one of the most famous in France.

To be trusted to manage this hotel and develop it into a leading luxury property in Paris is an honor.

Another one of my proudest achievements was overseeing the completion of Le Fouquet's new signature suites, which are modeled after classic Parisian townhouses.

We were able to maintain the historic integrity of the hotel, while creating an accommodation option that is enticing for a new luxury consumer audience.

These elegant suites, which feature extraordinary views of the Arc de Triomphe and Champs-lyses, answer the needs of today's luxury traveler, while maintaining respect for the past and our history.

Through the hotel renovation and suite refresh, we restored the interiors of this building to its original grandeur of 120 years ago.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

Health security is going to be a major consideration for the 2021 luxury traveler.

As we see the world evolve and things change, it will come down to our ability to anticipate and quickly react and respond to health and wellness concerns.

Those who can address health and wellness precautions quickly, efficiently and seamlessly will be successful.

Thankfully, this is where luxury hotels thrive and luxury travelers are smart. They'll be able to identify the hotels who are addressing guest health and wellness in a thoughtful, personalized and hassle-free way.



Erika Egede-Nissen

Erika Egede-Nissen, director of marketing, [Walker Zanger](#), Los Angeles

"Working with a team that is all behind a computer screen is the biggest personal challenge"

What do you most like about your job?

I am a marketer for premium stone and tile. What I enjoy most about my role is the interaction with architects and designers. It is a joy to see homes and commercial spaces brought to life through their lens.

Watching people experience space in a new light or way is a really fantastic feeling. I love being able to amplify their stories.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

Moving at the speed of technology and personal taste.

We have to constantly shift our products and promotions based on data and customer need.

It is my job as a marketer to constantly educate and inspire, keeping up with that will always be a challenge.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

Increased communications. Both with our internal and external customers, amplified communication has been key.

Producing more content has been very important. We have experienced a nice jump in followers, impressions and engagements.

Working with a team that is all behind a computer screen is the biggest personal challenge.

I really miss the interaction with graphic designers, especially.

We are all remote, keep our spirits up, and stay connected through technology platforms.

What is your work priority for 2021?

Amplifying the brand.

Really capturing those customers who have made their second or third home their new priority.

Working with the designers in helping these customers find the products and solution that will make these homes more livable for full time residents.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

Connecting brands to people.

We so often celebrate awards and accolades, but at the end of the day, it is about people and helping to make their lives a little bit better.

Growing brands and seeing human connection is what I am most proud of.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

Continued emphasis on sustainability. Not only products that are thoughtfully sourced and crafted, but those products that stand the test of time and support a holistic approach to luxury lifestyles.



Emily Essner

Emily Essner, chief marketing officer, [Saks Fifth Avenue](#), New York

"We need to determine how to serve customers in new and different ways to evolve with changing lifestyles and shopping preferences"

What do you most like about your job?

I feel fortunate that I get to shape an iconic brand that helps people to mold their identity through fashion.

Saks has always been known for delivering the best assortment and unparalleled services and experiences, but driving the strategy and overseeing the growing teams behind it has been truly gratifying.

More than anything though, working with great people and getting to watch individuals develop and pursue their passions is the best part of my job and incredibly rewarding.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

It's always a challenge to make the right short-term decisions while being able to drive long-term strategic goals.

Trying to do the right thing for tomorrow, while not losing sight of where we need to be several years down the road can be tough. It's always a balancing act.

Likewise, identifying and prioritizing the needs of the business and keeping up with the evolving customer demands requires focus, determination and a forward-thinking mindset.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

Since the start of the pandemic, the team has done a tremendous job in rethinking how we operate and best serve our customers.

We quickly created and leveraged new services Zoom appointments, curbside pickup, Hamptons delivery to cater to our clients in innovative ways.

While it has been a challenging time, it has also given us a great opportunity to hyper-accelerate longer-term strategic priorities, such as service offerings and digital initiatives.

What is your work priority for 2021?

Next year we will really see the hard work on our personalization strategy come to life.

Over the past several years, Saks has been laying the groundwork for several big projects, such as relaunching our new Web site, which will be the next significant milestone in our data and personalization strategy.

We will also supercharge our personalization efforts with new data and platforms to allow us to move faster and serve our customers in more meaningful and individualized ways.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

Shaping what Saks means to customers has been a top priority for me.

We have put in the work to evolve our brand image into a more inspiring, exciting and chic Saks Fifth Avenue.

We've really modernized the brand and delivered a better experience for our clients.

We have also been a lot bolder in using our voice and platform to push important cultural conversations.

From supporting LGBTQ+ rights with our Stonewall Inn partnership last year to championing women in power with our Fearless Female Speaker Series in 2018 as well as our upcoming Voting campaign, Saks is committed to creating meaningful change in communities across North America.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

As an industry, we need to determine how to serve customers in new and different ways to evolve with changing lifestyles and shopping preferences.

We will be constantly evaluating what is working for stores and clients to create the best experience possible, such as virtual eventing, integrated online and in-store experiences, and contactless services.

We will also continue to utilize more data to inform our decision-making processes to best serve our clients when and where they want to experience Saks.



Sara Iannicello

Sara Iannicello, director of design, [Whitehall Interiors](#), New York

"The design process is all about listening. There are many parties involved and problem solving is at the core"

What do you most like about your job?

Creating beautiful and highly functional spaces. Really, I could not imagine doing anything else.

There is such a joy in bringing a project from its inception to reality. I particularly love the creative and collaborative process of developing an initial concept and fine-tuning it into a working storyline.

Home is supposed to be a sanctuary, so working through the vision, ergonomics, privacy, functionality and details of it all to bring about a masterpiece is very thrilling.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

The design process is all about listening. There are many parties involved and problem solving is at the core of what we do at Whitehall.

I would say the biggest challenge is when there is a client that has a lot of experience in a different sector or region, say they are more familiar with workplace projects on the Pacific Coast.

Coming into the luxury multi-family residential sector in New York is very different and there's an educational approach you need to take.

Recognizing that everyone comes at a project with different ranges of experience and strengths is vital.

Being patient, resourceful, solution-driven, and working through those aspects are crucial to a successful project.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

COVID-19 has obviously had a significant impact across industries and ours is no exception.

Transitioning communication to online platforms and keeping the Whitehall teams organized was the biggest priority at the beginning.

Once we were able to figure out a good rhythm on the project team and management front, we have been looking at how to better use technology to our advantage.

Obviously, we require a lot of tactile engagement, so the loss of our material library during this pandemic has been the greatest challenge.

Yet, our Whitehall designers have been incredibly resourceful with creating their own smaller at-home libraries.

Overall, I'd say we've transitioned quite well.

What is your work priority for 2021?

Since I started at Whitehall in 2018, I've always had the aim to push us to greater heights.

We have a very talented team and as a firm our greatest resource is our people.

For 2021, our priority is to recognize, utilize and grow their skillsets by continuing to push the design envelope on our projects and venturing into new sectors and markets, and diversify our offerings.

In addition, of course, continuing to keep my finger on the pulse with respect to new architectural and design products in the marketplace will be critical.

Personally, I would like to see Whitehall add more hotel, restaurant and workplace projects into our portfolio, as well as product development.

Flexing our creative muscles in a wider range of luxe interiors would be good for Whitehall and our team members.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

I have gotten to a point in my career where that question starts to become a challenge.

Every year I've grown as a designer and there are certainly milestones that stand out over others.

However, if I look at the arc of my career, I'd say my proudest achievement has been maintaining my versatility and continuing to innovate the end-user experience.

Having a creative vision that draws from my design and client experience in hospitality, workplace and residential has been a significant advantage.

Introducing clients to luxe options that can be done differently, albeit more affordable or via an alternative approach, has certainly given me an edge in the design field and keeps me passionate about my work.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

Due to the public health crisis, we should expect to see a resurgence in luxe interiors that incorporate home office elements and more private outdoor spaces.

We may also find developers prioritizing "smarter luxury" options as well.

Emerging technologies have always been considered during design development, but since the tech space continues to make incredible strides, we could see some exciting developments on the horizon.

Overall, I think the public is craving affordable luxury options.

It seems like a paradox, but with the world facing economic instability, 2021 could be a year of much out-of-the-box innovation.



Lori Lane

Lori Lane, senior vice president for [new homes division City Haus](#), [luxury division, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices GA Properties](#), Atlanta

"Finding a sense of balance between work and my personal life is often a challenge"

What do you most like about your job?

As a leader, the potential to innovate and inspire is an everyday possibility.

I am fortunate to work with a team of passionate and creative minds with diverse backgrounds.

Each project that my team and I take on, we look for ways to exceed our success from previous work.

I am a big believer in collaboration and challenging everyone to bring their perspective to the team effort.

I enjoy seeing our projects evolve from concepts that start with thoughtful research, planning and execution to when we can all celebrate our collective success.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

Finding a sense of balance between work and my personal life is often a challenge for me.

As the mother of two children, I have personally dealt with the day-to-day struggles of working and raising a family. I

know how precious time is and the importance of balance.

Because I am so passionate about what I do, it is hard for me to leave work at the office, and I have had to be intentional about focusing on my family and my personal interests outside of work.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

My team and I are extremely collaborative with the work that we do.

When we first began working remotely, I was concerned about how the shift would affect our work flow since we would not all physically be able to brainstorm, conceptualize and create in the office.

I was pleasantly surprised and proud of how my entire team shifted and embraced working virtually with such a positive attitude.

I can honestly say that our work and level of creativity have remained consistent even though we haven't been physically together in months.

What is your work priority for 2021?

One of the great things about being associated with a company like Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices is the expansive network of brilliant minds across the world.

The marketing campaigns that we produce here in Atlanta are something that have also resonated with other markets.

I am inspired by the idea of collaborating with other cities/countries within our network to continue to enhance our campaigns and how we market luxury properties to bring more value to our agents' clients and customers.

With the challenges in the world today, how we show and sell real estate may need another approach and having a large network to market our properties all over the world is a direction I am focused on.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

Upon taking over the luxury division in 2014, we rebranded and launched a black-and-white, iconic fashion aesthetic that not only differed from the national luxury brand but also established us as a luxury presence in Atlanta.

In 2015, we continued to evolve the brand with a partnership with SCAD, Savannah College of Art and Design, and created an award-winning experiential marketing campaign that had not been seen before in luxury real estate marketing.

This initiative grew the original black and white campaign concept to include a lifestyle focused approach that incorporates the use of the five senses and evokes an emotional and aspirational response.

With the success of these campaigns, our luxury market share increased by 111 percent.

We have expanded on the ideas brought forth from that collaboration, and now all of our luxury marketing campaigns are conceptualized and produced completely in-house by my talented team.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

Because of everything that has taken place in 2020, I think we are going to see luxury take a different direction.

I am a firm believer that some of the best ideas come during a time of crisis, and I think that 2021 is going to be a year of a luxury renaissance.

Luxury is based on experiences, and because of the pandemic, consumers will be hesitant to take part in physical experiences.

Luxury leaders, myself included, are going to have to find a way to bring these experiences to consumers in a new virtual and digital way and still have the consumer feel a deep connection to the product.



Tara Lowenberg

Tara Lowenberg, founder/president, **TL Communications**, New York

"A huge part of owning a business is problem-solving and evolving"

What do you most like about your job?

I have always loved storytelling, and when I began my career after college, I thought I would be a writer or a filmmaker. After I opened my own creative communications agency years later, I was able to take that skillset and apply it to each of the brands that I work with.

I genuinely believe that every brand's success hangs on the story it tells.

With every new client or launch, we are allowed to craft a story that will resonate with media and consumers alike. This never gets old.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

The biggest challenge in the past few years has been defending the value of public relations.

When the world went digital, people began saying that PR is "traditional" and "outdated," and I wholeheartedly disagree.

I think all platforms that raise awareness of your brand are valuable, but nothing is more important than crafting a well-told brand story. This is where we come in.

Having a cohesive, well-told story is a brand's currency. Without that, any kind of promotion will be short-lived.

The platforms on which that story is told can be print, digital, Instagram, TikTok and I think they are all valuable.

Ironically, with COVID-19, we have seen a spike in PR services because people realize it is a reliable way of raising awareness of your brand.

The other major challenge we face is quantifying the value of PR.

How do we measure success? Until we have a better way to measure it, I always tell clients that when you Google a brand, it is more likely than not that a PR placement will come up in your search at the top of the list.

A public relations placement is an acknowledgment by an authority editors, producers, influencers which is still, in my opinion, better than any form of paid advertising or self-promotion.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

We were very fortunate during this time and did not have a lot of disruption.

We did not lose clients, and we worked very closely with all of our brands to make sure they felt supported during the pandemic.

Of course, there were a few logistical challenges in the beginning, but I am lucky to have a fantastic team and incredibly loyal clients, and we were able to find solutions.

A huge part of owning a business is problem-solving and evolving.

If you can't adapt to change, you will never survive the challenging times.

I think times like the one we are living through now are pivotal moments for so many businesses because you can either adapt and evolve or you close.

What is your work priority for 2021?

My work priority is to support my team and clients in every way I can so that they can survive and thrive during this difficult time.

I feel lucky to be able to participate in this next chapter in the luxury space for beauty, health and wellness, and look forward to helping brands navigate the changing landscape.

Change, though scary, can be a great thing.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

My proudest achievement in luxury is being part of the team that built Oribe Hair Care.

From the outset, the brand wanted to set a new standard of luxury in beauty.

When we launched, there were really no other beauty brands like it from its elegant black bottles this was unheard of for women's beauty products 10+ years ago to every detail of the packaging, fragrance, formulas, etc.

I had the opportunity to work with an incredible team of creative minds and learn different aspects of the business that I would otherwise not have known, which has added to the services we can provide.

When we finally created our PR strategy for Oribe, we had a real connection with the brand, and we spoke to the media as if the brand were an extension of us.

Today, Oribe Hair Care is synonymous with luxury.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

I think there is going to be a significant movement towards sustainability in the luxury beauty sector.

Brands are having more extensive conversations about how their products impact the world, consumers are demanding it, and I am excited to see the innovative ways it will be addressed in the luxury sector for beauty, health and wellness.



Rochelle Maize

Rochelle Maize, executive director luxury estates, [Nourmand & Associates](#), Beverly Hills, CA

"I absolutely love living and working in Beverly Hills with the ultra-high-net-worth clientele"

What do you most like about your job?

I love that I am able to blend both the right and left sides of my brain with my job as a real estate wealth advisor with Nourmand & Associates.

One minute I'm determining the value of a multimillion-dollar estate, and the next minute I'm developing the most creative over-the-top marketing plan to launch a new luxury listing. This keeps me really balanced and of course always challenged.

I also absolutely love living and working in Beverly Hills with the ultra-high-net-worth clientele, which enables me to view some of the world's most unique properties. I love my job.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

Figuring out the most creative way to market my luxury real estate listings to make them stand out from the crowd.

I always try and stay ahead of the curve and think outside of the box in marketing. This requires continuous reading and education on the social media front.

My days can be very unpredictable and packed with various challenges that require lots of creative problem solving. I have to be ready for anything.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

COVID-19 has definitely brought challenges in selling high-end luxury real estate. Because of this, our industry rules have changed dramatically.

We have lost the ability to host public open houses and launch parties, which has definitely taken the steam out of bringing new properties onto the market.

Technology is at the forefront of that transformation. Thanks to technology, particularly VR [virtual reality], we are able to continue to maintain our business virtually.

Those clients who cannot go out in public are able to view listings remotely through virtual reality. This way we can communicate, serve and listen to our client's wants and needs more effectively.

What is your work priority for 2021?

In business, to build my brand and to focus on my clients' needs and keep them happy.

I would also like to mentor more agents to help inspire and empower them

In my personal life, my priority is to work smarter so I can spend more time with my fabulous family and friends.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

I have been extremely fortunate to be part of many successes over the years and would love to share a few here.

My proudest achievement is my growth over the last five years in luxury real estate, working with Nourmand & Associates, to one of the top agents in the country and number one in Beverly Hills.

My absolute proudest achievement by far was taking a huge risk by pitching a potential client with an over-the-top idea that I had no idea if I could ever pull off. It was a make-or-break it pitch, and I knew it was going to be a home run or a big loss.

The idea was pitching the client to transition his very unique 8,000-square-foot penthouse into an Instagrammable Museum, so to speak.

The client was blown away, loved the idea, and the "The Insta-Penthouse" was born. It ended up being a huge marketing success and I represented both buyer and seller in this \$15 million transaction.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

Luxury in the ultra-high-end real estate marketplace has always been highlighted with the amenities.

I believe in 2021, the amenities will be geared more to home "at-home" experiences. Multiple home offices, expansive wellness retreats, golf and sports simulators, Zoom rooms, juice bars, fruit and vegetable gardens, sports courts list goes on.

In business, my focus has and will always be on my clients.

In this age of social media, information and the way we receive it changes rapidly.

I believe we will be leveraging technology even more in the luxury real estate sector and I will continue to stay ahead of the curve.

For clients, the continued growth to access all real estate information remotely will remain at the forefront of my priorities. This convenience is paramount.



Cristina Mariani May

Cristina Mariani-May, Old Brookville, NY-based CEO and proprietor, [Castello Banfi](#), Montalcino, Tuscany

"Something that's always important but especially now is making sure we maintain relevance and a competitive advantage in the market"

What do you most like about your job?

The energy and enthusiasm of working with a global team representing over 90 countries and sharing a passion and dedication to creating a finer wine world.

For most people, wine is a hobby that involves travel, culture, food and, of course, connections to fascinating people.

For me, this is also my career and I am blessed to lead a wonderful team as we continually strive to educate others about the history of fine wines, the uniqueness of the wines of Montalcino, Tuscany, particularly with our Castello Banfi Brunello di Montalcino, and to welcome guests to our 12th century castle and Il Borgo luxury hotel.

I also love having a glass of our La Pettegola Vermentino at the end of a busy day it transports me right to the Tuscan coast.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

Running a family business as a third-generation family member is oftentimes like running up a small hill, that becomes a mountain that never seems to flatten out.

Differentiating the emotions of the family from the discipline of business objectives requires mindfulness, patience and endurance.

I raise a glass of the finest Banfi wine in honor of all the women on this list who are also mothers, sisters, daughters and aunts and who need to juggle a marriage, kids, elderly parents all while traveling and maintaining a clear focus and posture in our business lives.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

Our ultra-premium wines have declined in sales due to the closures of restaurants worldwide, while the retail and direct-to-consumer channels still represent opportunity for wines considered affordable luxury.

This is the new norm for us and we are shifting our strategies, getting creative, looking for new ways to tell our stories to ensure that we maintain that dialogue with consumers.

Consumers more than ever look to brands they recognize and trust, and we are grateful to be able to share that brand authenticity.

I am also happy not to have to travel every week.

I cannot recall the last time I slept for more than a week in my own bed and with the children home from school it has been a blessing in disguise to be together.

What is your work priority for 2021?

Something that's always important but especially now is making sure we maintain relevance and a competitive advantage in the market.

Paying attention to what our consumers are looking for, making sure that we stay fluid and flexible enough to respond quickly.

Innovation is definitely a part of that too, so as challenging a time as it is, there's still a lot to look forward to.

I also look forward to reopening our Castello Banfi Il Borgo hotel in spring of 2021 and expanding our hospitality offerings.

Our 14-room luxury suite hotel is a Relais & Châteaux property that offers guests a unique experience to get away from the busy cities and enjoy the countryside while relaxing with fine wine and many amenities like cooking classes, balloon rides, bicycling, yoga and, of course, leisurely meals in our restaurants. A nice escape we can all dream about until then.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

The recognition of our estate bottled wines from Castello Banfi and the awards we continue to garner for our research and innovation.

Specifically, when the ISO organization from Geneva awarded Banfi the first winery in the world to receive triple ISO certification for exceptional environmental, social and ethical responsibility and a first in customer satisfaction.

What we pour our hearts into is more than a winery it's a 7,100-acre sustainable agricultural and vineyard estate.

While there are many fantastic wines in the marketplace, it is the ongoing effort to do pioneering research and share the work with our peers and industry that makes me most proud.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

We will see more appreciation for the simple pleasures, affordable luxury and the escape to beautiful, serene places via a glass of delicious wine.

If we are unable to travel to the vineyards of Tuscany and the quiet, natural setting of a countryside hotel, then at least we will be able to bring it into our homes and along with friends and family transport ourselves to a very special place. Salute!



Satta Matturi

Satta Matturi, founder/CEO, [Satta Matturi Fine Jewellery](#), London and Gaborone, Botswana

"Innovative designs and impeccable craftsmanship have always been at the heart of luxury offerings, but increasingly, consumers want to know more about the process and want to be part of it"

What do you most like about your job?

I particularly enjoy the process of researching and validating the inspirational themes that influence SMFJ [Satta Matturi Fine Jewellery] creations.

I personally build a story and vision for each project and ensure that this is fully integrated into the heart of each design, as I believe this brings authenticity and differentiation to a collection.

I also enjoy seeing the pieces come to life and going through the process of adjusting the symmetry and balance to get them just right.

Finally, I love diamonds and any opportunity to spend time with either rough or polished diamonds is not to be missed.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

Managing a brand/business based out of two countries, U.K. and Botswana, whilst connecting with a globally

diverse team.

We had plans to launch the new collection at the Couture show in Las Vegas at the end of May and continue to adjust and re-phase the project.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

The pandemic has forced us to be more innovative with our approach to doing business and, in some respects, allowed us to accelerate certain initiatives which otherwise may well have remained on the "tomorrow" list.

Amongst it all, though, there was suddenly a period of reflection where I could review the business, listen to a multitude of webinars and podcasts and absorb the creativity that's out there.

What is your work priority for 2021?

Having launched the new collection, we will be looking to continue with the wearable art concept and focusing on our collaborative work with galleries to showcase a curated line of designs.

I'm also looking forward to the launch of the new ecommerce platform, which would promote the brand to a broader audience.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

It has to be the SMFJ signature piece, which is the Nomoli Totem.

The design is an inspiration and re-imagining of the traditional African masks that feature in spiritual masquerades that are linked to original civilizations found in Central and West Africa.

It was a challenging piece to design and produce, including finding a specialist cutter who could shape the one-piece body of the totem in a variety of gemstones.

We were the first to create bejeweled versions of these mask forms and it has become synonymous with the brand.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

Innovative designs and impeccable craftsmanship have always been at the heart of luxury offerings, but increasingly, consumers want to know more about the process and want to be part of it.

This consumer-led pull will ensure that every part of the value chain, especially our environment, is considered in a slow and ethical way.

I have to say that I'm also anticipating an explosion of creativity across art, design, music and luxury.

The last few months have been really tough across the globe on so many levels, but it has taken us out of our comfort zones, made us re-imagine so many aspects of life and, undoubtedly, this will be reflected in a renaissance of creativity and design.



Leona Qi

Leona Qi, president, [VistaJet U.S.](#), New York

"With luxury travel continually evolving, private aviation will become the new normal for the remainder of the year and well into 2021"

What do you like most about your job?

What I like most about my job is to work with some of the most successful businesses and people in the world.

Private aviation is a business tool in bringing people from point A to point B while simultaneously aiding global

recovery.

One of my favorite facts I like to share is that when a private jet lands in a destination, it brings the economy up by 20 percent.

I enjoy changing people's perceptions and seeing private aviation in a new light.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

As business aviation is typically the first industry to get hit and the last to recover with any global crisis, COVID-19 has been our biggest challenge this year.

It's been challenging, yet rewarding, to combat the pandemic as we've been working tirelessly to facilitate repatriation flights, work with medical officials to transport key medical supplies and experts, bring families home from other countries and more.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

Thanks to my supportive and driven team, I have adapted well to the new normal that we are living.

With weekly and sometimes daily Zoom calls on the business-front and a solid schedule for my family, I've had the opportunity to spend much more time with my loved ones, which I normally would not have traveling at least two to three times per month.

This time at home, along with the support of my team, has allowed me the opportunity to watch my 13-month-old son have his "firsts." From hearing his first words to watching him take his first steps, this extra family time has been wonderful.

What is your work priority for 2021?

My biggest work priority for 2021 will be focusing on our newly unveiled Global 7500 aircraft.

We just introduced the Global 7500 to our fleet earlier in 2020 and it's the world's largest and longest-range business jet that offers four luxurious living spaces, a full-size kitchen, visionary lighting and the industry's first circadian-rhythm lighting system to combat jetlag.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

My proudest achievement at VistaJet has been growing the North American customer base as it continues to be the biggest and fastest-growing market in business aviation and for VistaJet.

Over the past four years, my team and I have garnered double-digit year-on-year growth over successive years.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

With luxury travel continually evolving, private aviation will become the new normal for the remainder of the year and well into 2021.

As private aviation offers the security, flexibility of travel and privacy that is not guaranteed by any other type of transport, we foresee a lot of new entries from first or business class flyers shifting into flying private.

As of now, we've already seen a huge uptick with 71 percent of incoming sales calls coming from those who have never flown privately before. We expect this number to increase as 2021 rolls around.



Kathleen Ruiz

Kathleen Ruiz, founder/CEO, [KRW Consulting](#), New York

"Luxury faced a big challenge this year that every business faced: find a way to survive in a world that has suddenly stopped"

What do you most like about your job?

I love that none of my days look quite the same and I have the ability to advise clients in areas that I am most passionate about, including marketing, partnerships and media relations.

Further, consulting is an ever-changing industry that has allowed me to work with a variety of clients from retail and real estate to service and nonprofit.

Having previously spent decades in corporate roles in luxury, building my own consulting business has been an exciting and, at times, scary undertaking, but I am grateful that I took the leap and have the opportunity to work with incredible brands with an amazing support team.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

Now that my name is on the door, I am directly responsible for exceeding the expectations of my clients and providing them with as much of my time and full attention as possible.

In my prior roles, there was a certain level of protection and safety that came from working for someone else. I have been lucky to work for some of the best retail brands in the world, but when I started my own business, the stakes were much higher.

I'm accountable for bringing successful results to my clients and steering them on the path that achieves their objectives. It's challenging, but it's also what I thrive on the most.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

COVID-19 has certainly challenged the way brands communicate with their customers.

The consumer mindset has shifted and I anticipate we will feel this shift well into the future.

We are living and learning through this time along with our clients and advising them to focus in areas that make the most sense, such as digital marketing.

Digital is important now more than ever as brands must connect with consumers in a virtual way that still feels meaningful and authentic.

As far as my business goes, in a strange way, I feel closer to my team now more than ever.

We check in via video calls more frequently as we need to be even more connected now to better serve our clients.

It's been a challenging world to navigate, but we are finding it has encouraged us to be more creative.

What is your work priority for 2021?

My priority is always the same, to provide as much value as I can for my clients.

I operate a lean business with a core group of skilled team members that have followed me throughout my career plus an outside group of executive advisors and industry experts that I leverage as needed depending on the needs of my client.

The agency model is evolving before our eyes from one that is factory-like, churning out work with account managers, to smaller, leaner organizations that have the ability to provide customized, tailored service.

For 2021, I hope to expand my company and offer additional resources for my clients while providing the same level of service they have come to expect.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

This is such a tough question for me.

I have been fortunate to work with iconic luxury retailers Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue at very exciting times.

I was always surrounded by the most incredible creative minds that worked with me to develop incredible and memorable customer experiences.

But in the end, I would have to say building my own business has been my proudest achievement and something I never thought I would have attempted a decade ago.

Going into our fourth year, I feel very proud of what I've accomplished and hope I can serve as an inspiration to women everywhere to follow their dreams and to always believe that you can achieve what you want to achieve with hard work and dedication.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

Luxury faced a big challenge this year that every business faced: find a way to survive in a world that has suddenly stopped.

Within a matter of days, we had to fundamentally change how we do business.

For 2021, brands will need to look at new ways of attracting the luxury consumer and providing brand experiences that don't involve traveling or large groups.

We are already seeing this with creative virtual events or presentations that provide unique experiences.

While digital marketing and ecommerce is a given, I do believe that consumers will still desire to touch and feel luxury, so finding ways to keep consumers safe and comfortable in person will definitely be an evolving trend we see in 2021.

Transparency and sustainability will continue to be important to today's consumers, so I think we will see increased brand messaging about that in the coming year.

Lastly, luxury needs to be nimble.

If we learned anything during this time, it's that customers want brands that are honest, ethical and, above all, authentic.



Fiona Sanderson

Fiona Sanderson, managing director, [The Luxury Channel](#), Princes Risborough, England, U.K.

"More brands will be blending the physical and social worlds with digitally immersive retail experiences"

What do you most like about your job?

Being at the forefront of one of the most exciting industries in the world and being able to showcase, interview and film some of the world's luxury leaders, artists and craftsmen.

Through our platform, it's exciting to engage audiences with unique content of the finest destinations and experiences, and the culture and craftsmanship that define modern luxury.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

To persuade luxury brands to invest even further in video content.

The power of video across digital platforms, social media and Web sites, is unquestionably invaluable to reach multi-international audiences with brand storytelling, craftsmanship and behind-the-scenes content.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

As the Luxury Channel is an online distribution platform with a roster of TV directors, editors and writers working independently across the world, we have been fortunate enough to continue the luxury conversation by providing high-quality video and online editorial.

Travel and international production has been challenging, but we have the benefit of using local TV crews.

What is your work priority for 2021?

I am working on an exciting relaunch of The Luxury Channel in the autumn and I will be announcing a new TV partnership in Monaco and Asia.

As the marketing ambassador for M/Y Njord, the world's next generation of residential superyacht, I will continue to work on this unique project.

As trustee of the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in Africa, I will continue to highlight the plight of wildlife.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

To know that a company that I cofounded in 2007 is now recognised as one of the leading multi-media platforms for luxury lifestyle content and our programs are distributed to over 250 million homes throughout the EMEA and Asia, reaching an audience of over 8 million monthly viewers drawn from the top 20 percent of income earners.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

I think you will see luxury brands becoming more innovative in both the retail and online space.

More brands will be blending the physical and social worlds with digitally immersive retail experiences.

Online, video content, augmented and virtual reality will be used to entertain and engage the next generation of luxury consumers.

Times are challenging now, but I foresee exciting times ahead for the luxury industry and I am glad to be a part of it.



Olivia Skuza

Olivia Skuza, cofounder/co-CEO, **NuOrder**, Los Angeles

"The word 'impossible' is not really in my vocabulary"

What do you most like about your job?

I love the fact that I get to work with incredible brands and retailers and help solve critical business problems.

Our platform drives sales and improves retail buying, so we are solving important priorities that have direct revenue impact.

I still find it incredibly humbling today that we have so many retailers and brands alike who rely on our software to run their businesses.

No customer is the same and I'm continually learning and growing as to how we can continue to positively impact more of their business with technology.

When customers embrace our product, I am still incredibly giddy when they share their successes as it feels like they are our successes too.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

Fundamentally, we are dealing with an industry that has resisted the adoption of technology in its business practices.

The learning curve and adoption has been steeper than what I would've ever thought.

However, these last few years, in particular, the market has been accelerating forward rapidly and that's even more true with the recent impact of COVID.

The world is different as we know it and it's the businesses that are willing to make key changes and move fast that will see success on the other side.

I think another challenge for me is that I am, and will always be, a serial entrepreneur. What this means is that I want to move fast and it's at a different pace than most are used to and I also like to take on as many of the right opportunities as possible even though they might appear to be impossible.

The word "impossible" is not really in my vocabulary.

I'm fortunate now that I'm surrounded by a team who thinks and wants the same, but it's not everyone's cup of tea and you want to make sure you hire and surround yourself with people who have a shared mindset and attitude.

Reality is that you don't get many chances in life to have a real impact and you have to seize whatever is in front of you.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

For us, it's accelerated change of behavior in the right way.

Now brands and buyers are no longer travelling. There is no opportunity to see people face to face at tradeshow or in a showroom during market week or see product live during Fashion Week.

The industry needs a solution to operate in a work-from-home environment and, in many instances, in the absence of conducting business in-person.

As soon as COVID hit, we did a mass survey and we were in listening mode.

We were extremely focused on talking to customers and understanding their challenges and where they needed help.

Many customers were stressed, uncertain and rightly so, concerned about the future.

We took the feedback and, as a result, we've made some immediate pivots to our roadmap and prioritized more urgent and timely initiatives, e.g. our Virtual Showroom offering as one example.

Brands needed immersive online shopping experiences, so we quickly prioritized and got this out to market in record time to address a real need in the market.

In this type of environment, we have to be agile, adaptive and flexible now more than ever.

What is your work priority for 2021?

We have established a strong presence in North America with Saks, Bloomingdale's and Nordstrom.

Europe has been a major growth hub of late in 2020 and I expect this trend to continue into 2021

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

Retail buying and wholesale had to change. The antiquated processes were costing both brands and buyers billions through inefficiency and misplaced buying, leading to markdowns.

Pen, paper and the spreadsheet was the norm and was a big process to overturn.

I am incredibly proud that we have been the driving force and industry platform that is driving real benefits helping our retail partners pick the right products and allow our brand partners to sell more effectively.

We are partnering with incredible retailers who work with the best luxury brands in the world and delivering real value for both sides through our technology.

Seeing how brands and retailers alike have evolved, how they sell and buy, in a completely virtual way, it has been very exciting to be part of this transformation.

The status quo is being challenged and there is a new way of working.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

Virtual showings and appointments are now the norm.

People are not going to go all the way back. The best brands are going to embrace the benefits of this new paradigm and be able to show new product.

I see shorter supply timelines as product data will flow from brand to retailer systems, meaning a product can be shown, bought by the retailer and in-store/online in a greatly reduced time-frame, which also supports the consumer demand.

The "see now, buy model" is now more relevant than ever.



Zornitza Stefanova

Zornitza Stefanova, founder/CEO, **BSPK**, San Francisco

"Mainland China will play a key role for brands"

What do you like most about your job?

The people. From my team in Europe, Silicon Valley and New York, to our global heritage customers, their brand advisors on the store floor and the executives in the boardroom.

Our message is: people are the No. 1 priority. Their experience matters and it creates the lasting bond that enables global brands with decades- or centuries-long history to thrive and to continue to bring joy and great memories in our lives.

The joy a great shopping experience with a human touch brings to our lives cannot be underestimated, especially in these times.

As luxury becomes increasingly inclusive, sustainable and encouraging of the global environment, our mission is to empower our customers with great tools for a modern age.

Technology is an enabler of great human experiences, and not an impediment.

The thought and dedication I put daily into my work as a founder and CEO of BSPK in our drive to create a modern future for luxury are what I love most about my job.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

In-person interaction with our customers and their sales advisors is so important.

Under normal circumstances, I spend half my time in Paris, where we currently work with the leading luxury brands of the world.

Now, amid COVID, this is more difficult but thankfully, I have an amazing and growing team in Paris.

Our customers are also avid users of Microsoft Teams and Zoom. All of a sudden, we are further apart but also closer.

We can schedule my meetings with one day's notice and everyone is available.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

BSPK has not stood still for a minute. In fact, we have accelerated to best serve the growing needs of customers.

We are taking on new clients and adding new services for existing ones in new markets.

We are expanding in different languages, including Japanese, Chinese and Arabic.

For us, the pandemic has shone a spotlight on the urgency of connecting the shopping experience across touch points: in-store, out of store, ecommerce, and doing so while enhancing the ability of sales advisors and brands to provide great personal service.

It's a moment that calls for agility. Fortunately, because we built BSPK to be flexible, it can connect to a brand's existing technology very quickly.

For example, we connected a brand's internal POS system to BSPK with access to live client and live stock data in

just six weeks.

COVID has pushed our customers and us to move and meet their clients' demands even more quickly than before.

What is your work priority for 2021?

To double the size of my team and to triple revenues, bringing on more leading customers, while continuing to meet and exceed the goals of our existing customers

Also, to think globally, and to connect the dots further across the entire spectrum of the client journey.

As McKinsey's analysts wrote about the future of **customer experience**, white-glove service is both inevitable and economical.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

Coming from Silicon Valley, it is important to start a company with a mission. Mine is to lead BSPK to be the global industry standard and category leader, and become the next-generation customer engagement platform for high value transactions.

We are only two years in and the momentum is electric, with some of our customers realizing 85 percent sales conversion and three-fold increase in client retention measured over six months when they engage clients through BSPK.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

Customer service and digital remote engagement with a human touch will become the linchpin for the future success of brands, which will have to get very close to customers and carefully listen to their needs if they want to count them as future clients.

I think we are heading into an exciting period of accelerated innovation for brands. They are already talking about digital stores, empowering all their sales advisors with the right tools and actionable data in order to curate memorable shopping experiences.

Nike just opened a House of Innovation megastore in Paris which it says is the perfect manifestation of how consumers now shop, which is both digital and physical; combining innovation, storytelling and experiences.

In addition, mainland China will play a key role for brands. This will drive more innovation as brands need to think more like innovators to reach Chinese consumers. This will have a positive knock-on effect in the West.



Jennifer Stucko

Jennifer Stucko, founder/CEO, **Prota Fiori**, New York

"Although there is a lot of buzz circulating female empowerment and female-led businesses, the reality is that approximately less than 2 percent of venture capital goes to women"

What do you most like about your job?

As one of my favorite motivational speakers and authors quotes, "People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it."

The simplest gratification of starting my own purpose-led company created on the ethos of sustainability is having the ability to spark curiosity and drive change.

I believe that leaders who start with what they believe in will inspire action for those around them, because in the end we follow those who lead not for themselves, but for others.

Prota Fiori is a pure manifestation of my desire to have a positive impact on humanity and I'm grateful for this opportunity everyday.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

I certainly like to redefine challenges as opportunities and embrace them with open arms.

That said, one of the biggest opportunities I face is raising capital.

Although there is a lot of buzz circulating female empowerment and female-led businesses, the reality is that approximately less than 2 percent of venture capital goes to women.

That said, I like to think that I've grown an even thicker skin with my approach to entrepreneurship.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

I have been living with the mentality that tomorrow is not promised, and it is not promised to be the same as today for quite some time.

In this sense, my mentality has not changed, but, of course, I have adapted to new ways of communicating, socializing and managing the expectations of my new business.

The best things in life come from within you, and I've been taking advantage of this time to take some extra care and nurturing of myself in order to manifest new intentions in my life and business.

What is your work priority for 2021?

My work priority for 2021 is closely tied to what I like most about my purpose, which is to spark curiosity, inspire action and drive change on both the industry and consumer level.

Prota Fiori has been conceived with the belief that our business can be a catalyst for change and my priority remains to continuously build an authentic and socially impactful company with sustainability at the center of it all.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

My proudest achievement in luxury has been creating Prota Fiori. The brand is a culmination of what I believe in, what's important to me and who I am.

My personal journey is reflected and intermingled into every aspect of the brand's DNA from the voice, the mood and tone and, most importantly, the values.

As I build Prota Fiori, I always take a step back before I bring on a new partner, as it's important that they must be aligned with what we stand for at our core, and I am proud of this integrity.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

I believe that luxury consumers are becoming more aware of sustainability, and fashion consumers, in particular, are realizing that you do not need to sacrifice design, style and quality to buy sustainable footwear made in Italy, the most recognized country filled with the most skilled shoe artisans in all of the world.

I believe with the broader cultural tailwinds around sustainability, Prota Fiori, in particular, will aim to catalyze the shift by filling the gap in the market and fulfilling consumers' desire to shop consciously.



Ginger Taggart

Ginger Taggart, vice president for global luxury brands, **IHG**, Atlanta, GA

"Today more than ever, consumers are choosing brands, especially luxury brands, by the deeper values"

represented"

What do you most like about your job?

The favorite part of my job is the ability to delight guests from around the world by providing an intricately curated backdrop for amazing memories backed by the reassurance of safety and cleanliness as one would expect from trusted brands.

In hospitality, guests truly live within the immersive world of a luxury brand its design, service and essence come to life and become a catalyst for treasured moments, often some of the very best memories of life.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

These are some of the most challenging times for the travel industry.

In today's climate, looking after our guests, teams and communities, and supporting our owners while continuing to deliver meaningful luxury experiences are the top priorities.

The challenge is to keep innovating despite the uncertainty.

Good ideas are abundant and continually compete for attention, but breakthrough ideas need to be courageously found and nurtured even while moving at pace.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

I have been incredibly proud to work at IHG during this unprecedented period.

From IHG's First Responders First program offering free accommodation to frontline COVID-19 first responders to the rapid launch of the IHG Clean Promise to ensure safety remains paramount, values of "True Hospitality" blazed forward.

Today more than ever, consumers are choosing brands, especially luxury brands, by the deeper values represented. The brands that truly connect with today's modern, luxury consumer will embody intrinsic, humanitarian values.

What is your work priority for 2021?

The priority for 2021 remains continuing to deliver "True Hospitality" across the globe and across all of our brands, supporting our owners and colleagues while continuing to delight our guests.

As we move into the next-normal phase of luxury hospitality, there will be a true desire for extraordinary experiences, which we are poised to deliver.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

Working with an incredible team to drive IHG's luxury portfolio to become a formidable force in the luxury landscape has been a true joy.

From the strong foundation of InterContinental Hotels & Resorts and Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants in early 2018 to be complemented with the acquisition of Regent and Six Senses brands only two years later, it has been an unprecedented level of growth for IHG's luxury portfolio, with unique luxury brands catering to individual guest needs.

Perhaps the highlight has been the full re-imagination of the iconic Regent brand and leading the talented team who brought this to life.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

The current unprecedented time has driven an even deeper awareness amongst luxury consumers an increased desire for brands with deep values, an appreciation for the pleasures of time with loved ones, time to recharge in nature and beautiful, luxury settings, and a feeling of broader personal impact and connectiveness.

These will continue to become important themes as luxury moves even more deeply into the experiential realm with customers searching for trusted brands who deliver upon these modern luxury tenants.



Paige Thomas

Paige Thomas, president/CEO, **Saks Off 5th**, New York

"I've been focused on changing the way we operate to act more like an off-price business rather than follow a traditional department store model"

What do you most like about your job?

Retail is a team sport. As a long-time sports fan, I've always thrived off of a collaborative environment where we are all in this together working toward a common goal.

Fostering a supportive and inclusive culture at Saks Off 5th where our team is empowered to achieve their goals is a top priority for me.

What really energizes me is seeing the continuous customer evolution and how we need to adapt our business regularly to stay relevant.

Every day is different and winning in off-price requires you to be agile and quick.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

Since coming on board, I've been focused on changing the way we operate to act more like an off-price business rather than follow a traditional department store model.

Off-price luxury is a fast-paced industry, and how quickly we move is of utmost importance.

We need to be scrappy and opportunistic with all of our decisions, while keeping the customer front and center.

The team has really embraced this way of thinking and we've built a nice momentum as we evolve into a true luxury off-price retailer.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

This pandemic has been unlike anything I've experienced before, personally and professionally.

I joined Saks Off 5th in February and we made the decision to close all of our stores in the U.S. and Canada in mid-March due to COVID-19.

Needless to say, we have had to quickly pivot to a new way of working and I'm really proud of how our team has persevered through this time.

While our stores were closed, our digital business remained strong and we continue to see significant opportunity in that area.

All of our stores were reopened by the end of June and we have been pleased with our omni-performance thus far.

In this environment, we see a great opportunity ahead within luxury off-price to capitalize on market conditions and provide even more value to our customers as well as our vendor partners.

What is your work priority for 2021?

We have all been managing through uncharted territory and I'm confident we will be turning the corner in 2021 together.

During periods of economic uncertainty, the off-price market has historically seen growth.

We know that there is white space in the luxury off-price market. We're focused on capturing it, while capitalizing on

current market conditions to expand our brand access and assortment, ultimately, delivering the best experience for our customers.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

Prior to joining Saks Off 5th, I spent eight years at Nordstrom, most recently as executive vice president and general merchandising manager men's and kids.

In that role, I developed the curated merchandise assortment and exclusive offerings for the Nordstrom Men's Store in New York, the company's first full-price location in the city and a significant milestone for the brand.

With that said, I truly believe that the best achievements are still to come while at Saks Off 5th.

We have a valuable customer base, given their brand affinity, household income and overall spend, and have confidence in our store and digital experience. All of this leads to significant opportunities for growth.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

There's an opportunity to view everything from the customer lens and tailor our businesses to how customers really want to shop and build their wardrobe. It may not be head-to-toe designer.

For us at Saks Off 5th, that means ensuring we have the right brands at the right location at the right time for our customers.

The Saks Off 5th shopper loves Prada and Gucci, while at the same time has Adidas in their closet.

For the luxury off-price industry, there's still a great opportunity in digital as more and more shoppers are looking for the thrill of the find online.

This summer we completed the migration of our Web site to a new platform, which will provide online shoppers an improved experience ahead of the holiday season.

With an enhanced digital channel, we see even more runway ahead to differentiate ourselves online.



Dominika Trawka

Dominika Trawka, founder, [Luxury Consulting Online](#), Geneva, Switzerland

"By 2025, Generations Y and Z will account for almost 50 percent of luxury clients, so the time to reach them is now"

What do you most like about your job?

My job is never boring.

My clients come from many different industries: fashion, beauty, jewelry, watches, home decor, interior design, etc.

Each project is different, each client has a specific vision and goals, his or her own style of management.

I adapt to them and their needs, while they benefit from my experience and recommendations. We grow together.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

The biggest challenges in my work are challenges of my clients.

Nowadays, they have to build the image of the brand in online channels. It is necessary as the youngest generations and their future clients spend a great share of their time in social media.

The challenge is to communicate to them while not losing the luxury image.

By 2025, Generations Y and Z will account for almost 50 percent of luxury clients, so the time to reach them is now.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

My business was designed to serve clients remotely and online, so I did not have to change much.

The crisis even stimulated the demand for my advisory services, as now many companies need to adapt to the new reality and look for external help.

I also see that my plans to launch educational online courses should be finalized even faster than I thought.

What is your work priority for 2021?

My priority and mission remain the same: to educate my clients, support and recommend valuable marketing initiatives, improve their communication and promote transparency.

I focus on the "new luxury," which is much more environmentally friendly, minimalist, purpose and value based.

I will definitely follow this direction in 2021.

Besides, I will launch my online products like courses, e-books and industry reports.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

In my opinion, the "new luxury" is coming: more transparent, more aware, more sustainable.

We will observe mindful luxury attitudes among companies as well as consumers.

Online sales will boom and consumers will change their attitude, decision-making processes and purchase behavior for good.



Nadia Tuma-Weldon

Nadia Tuma-Weldon, senior vice president and director, **McCann Worldgroup Truth Central**, and lead, global luxury practice, McCann

"I often make the case that luxury is necessary, because the foundations of true luxury are rooted in essential humanist qualities of care, thoughtfulness, respect and community"

What do you most like about your job?

I've been obsessed with understanding humans and culture my whole life. I can't turn that part of me off.

I'm lucky enough that this is precisely what I do for a living, though from my perspective, there really isn't "work" and "not work" when it comes to this.

Our team works in service of uncovering the deeply human truths that shape the way people behave, and not just at a surface level.

We take an almost poetic view of the world, because humanity is complex and beautiful.

The dedication to understanding the world fuels everything that we do, and it genuinely fascinates and motivates me every day.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

At times, the word luxury' can have a lot of baggage, and runs the risk of not being taken seriously, or seen as something for a privileged few.

The reaction can be: given all of the crises facing the world, why are we talking about luxury?

I often make the case that luxury is necessary, because the foundations of true luxury are rooted in essential

humanist qualities of care, thoughtfulness, respect and community.

These are values that can be an antidote for many of the ills facing the world, and luxury has a role to play in that.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

Firstly, I am very lucky that my job can be done from anywhere, and given the state of the world, I have no complaints and our team has adapted quickly.

However, the inability to travel has been challenging as it's always kept me tapped into the global "streets."

In a given year, I travel throughout the U.S., to France and Greater Europe, South America and all the way to China, Japan and Southeast Asia.

I get so much inspiration from these travels, so I've had to make a conscious effort to get out of my New York bubble during this time.

The good news is that our team of fabulous luxury experts from all corners of the planet are in regular contact to share ideas and experiences.

What is your work priority for 2021?

Our luxury practice recently launched a platform called Elevated Voices, which aims to co-create an inclusive future of luxury. It serves as both a guideline for our activities as a practice, and as a strategic imperative for brands.

This platform will ensure we are asking the right questions regarding inclusion of ideas and perspectives for our thought leadership and will act as a lightning rod for further cultural conversations with our clients.

I am energized about our approach for creating a world of luxury where everyone feels included. Stay tuned in 2021.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

By far, my proudest achievement has been creating the global luxury practice. This is a dream I've had for a long time: to bring together amazing people from Europe, South America, Asia and America whose mission is to redefine and recast luxury for a modern era.

Every member of our team brings a different perspective based on their culture, experience, discipline, age, orientation and beyond, and we're all invested in innovating our tools and ideas.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

While I don't have a crystal ball, I've been thinking about a range of themes potentially shaping the culture of luxury, most notably how the pandemic has accelerated changes that the industry has long acknowledged the need for but has nevertheless been traditionally slow to adopt.

This includes a call for actions like fewer fashion seasons and, on a broader scale, an evolution to a hybrid, online/offline retail model.

Think: more video consultations with sales associates, virtual trunk shows, elevated on-demand delivery coupled with appointment-only physical store visits as well as more specialized experiences for in-person events.

On a more personal level, with the tremendous amount of economic suffering, there will be more discretion the return of the "stealth wealth" that followed the 2008 financial crises. Driving a flashy new car or sporting an "it" bag, for example, will be seen in poor taste.

I expect an increase of in-home luxuries away from outside judgment like Mirror and Peloton, cashmere loungewear and first-rate kitchen equipment. A focus on deep wellness practices done privately.

Lastly, and of utmost importance, luxury brands will need to genuinely walk the walk in terms of their commitment to inclusion, core values and subsequent actions. There is little patience left for empty promises.



Maria von Scheel-Plessen

Maria von Scheel-Plessen, global head of media and advertising, **Montblanc**, Hamburg, Germany

"The focus is a lot on brand safety, which is often challenging for activations such as programmatic buying"

What do you most like about your job?

I am most inspired by the heritage and craftsmanship in luxury goods, visiting ateliers in which our products are being created with employees whose skills are very rare these days, e.g. fine watchmaking.

It is an exciting industry to work in as we embrace smart products and ecommerce revenue accelerates.

The combination of historical brand value and technological development inspires me.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

As I am managing 22 markets, the challenge lies in local specificities.

When formalizing a global advertisement and budget allocation strategy from HQ, it almost cannot be global as we need to respect local demands. Especially in Asia, the launch of new apps and platforms happens so quickly, we need to have glocal approach.

Another exciting challenge is to embrace the old and the new when working on the digital side of luxury.

We need to respect heritage, but also refer to modernity and adapt to consumer demands. The focus is a lot on brand safety, which is often challenging for activations such as programmatic buying.

How have you adapted to the new order of things with the public health crisis?

The pandemic has put things back into perspective. It demanded for the need to go from quantity to quality in terms of consumer behavior during a difficult economic situation.

Luxury is rather seen as a long-term investment and the focus shifted towards limited editions and premium materials, e.g. diamonds and gold with rising value.

Very important is also the emotional connection to the user and the focus on brand desirability and meaningful communication rather than short-term sales.

Personally, it has been a time of proving agility and empathy with a completely remote team management. But it is also a good time to reflect and appreciate everyone and everything around you.

What is your work priority for 2021?

Digitalization of offline/retail, continue to focus on technology and having the right tools at hand to track a 360-degree ecosystem including offline revenue. Enabling a seamless customer journey and very customized communicational approach.

Focus on supporting women to settle in the luxury and tech industry. I founded a Lean-In circle, which enables a constant exchange and mentorship opportunity. We need more initiatives to embrace diversity.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

The setup of attribution modeling for online and offline revenue tracking in our key markets. As luxury has a strong retail network, this has been a key milestone to evaluate the impact of digital advertisement on offline sales, defining the number of consumer touch points and ROI.

The achievement of bringing digital transformation on the agenda and start an omni-directional conversation on

various international stages.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2021?

I see a demand from very strongly, but not only Gen Y and Z towards sustainability, going away from fast fashion to the focus on luxury "evergreen" pieces with stable value, e.g. Montblanc Meisterstueck, Herms Kelly or Birkin bags.

Gifting will continue, which is crucial in luxury.

Further I would expect a change in the business model of luxury, looking at growing ecommerce demand. This goes hand in hand with a change in business ethics, e.g. mobile working.

I see a hybrid of pre and post COVID status and hope for a soon rebound on key markets.

Looking at this, I am full of excitement and optimism to work for an industry which makes products to last.

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