

Q&A

Off the Cuff: A Q&A with Monogram's Julie Burns

July 12, 2024



Julie Burns is executive director of U.S. luxury appliance brand Monogram. Image courtesy of Monogram

By AMIRAH KEATON

Introducing "Off the Cuff," a new Q&A series from Luxury Daily exploring the career paths, current projects and next steps of those shaping the world's best luxury brands.

The interviews feature a Proust-style twist, allowing readers to get to know industry leaders on a personal level. The fifth edition features Julie Burns, executive director of U.S. luxury appliance brand **Monogram**.

In this Q&A, Ms. Burns discusses the value of cross-setting communication, lessons learned from starting out in luxury after the 2008 recession, the philanthropic brand projects making an impact and the connection between music and mood, among other topics. Here is the dialogue:



The high-end, luxury kitchen appliance company is owned by GE, with showrooms available nationwide. Image credit: Monogram

What was your first job ever? What did it teach you?

My first job was waiting tables at a local, family-run restaurant during high school. It was an incredible experience that taught me three valuable lessons that have stayed with me throughout my career.

The first lesson was meeting customers' expectations by learning how to "read the room" to gauge their needs and adjust my service accordingly. Secondly, I honed my skills in problem resolution and learned how to take ownership to solve issues that

arose, even in a role where I had no control over the operation of the restaurant.

Finally, I cultivated a deep understanding of teamwork and communication, recognizing how seamless coordination between front and back-of-house operations elevates customer experiences and service standards.

Which skills have been critical to your success? Did you gain these skills within or outside of the workplace?

Communication is key, both within and outside of the workplace.

The ability to analyze data and distill those findings into easily digestible insights has been a core skill for me, largely developed during my early career in consumer insights.

Additionally, problem-solving and finding solutions that work for everyone involved have allowed me to be creative and keep projects moving forward.

What is the best piece of advice you've ever received?

Two pieces of advice have stayed with me throughout my career.

First, you are your own best advocate, so stay true to who you are. Every role has its nuances and company cultures will vary, but your own North Star will guide you through any challenges.

Second, if you have a big idea, start small with a pilot to prove its success before scaling it. This approach allows for quicker alignment across stakeholders and lowers the risk if the strategy or tactics need further refinement.

How has your field changed since you started out in luxury, and what do you think your industry will look like in a decade?

When I started in luxury, it was right after the 2008 recession.

Luxury brands were focused on honing their value propositions rooted in craftsmanship and quality while diversifying their portfolios with new products, services or markets. Today, while our brand values and pillars remain consistent, we continually evolve our execution to stay modern and connected to the consumer.

At Monogram, we evolve to meet and exceed the expectations of luxury consumers, which is something I love about our brand and this industry.

In the future, I anticipate even greater emphasis on personalization, sustainability and technological integration to enhance the luxury experience. For example, we know younger generations value companies that are making strides to help preserve our environment.

At Monogram, we've introduced the EcoBalance Collection, which brings together our energy efficient products, along with our sister brands for home product expansion. It also includes a partnership with Savant that provides a revolutionary whole-home solution that allows consumers to take control of their energy efficiency and management.

While there's still work to do, we know how important it is to play a role in leaving this world in a better place for future generations.

What recent projects have ignited your passion for working in luxury?

I have recently had the pleasure of working on projects that truly embody Monogram's positioning at the intersection of design and culinary excellence.



Lexus collaborated with the luxury appliance brand last month, revealing Monogram GX, a custom concept car featuring a bar, ice press and brick oven. Image courtesy of Lexus

On the design side, Monogram launched its first Designer Collection, showcasing our perspective on customization. We partnered with renowned designer and Monogram creative director Richard Anuszkiewicz to introduce two design aesthetics: brass and titanium.

This collection features the industry's only 96-inch refrigeration panels, 53-inch oversized customized hoods and leather handles for refrigeration and ranges, produced in collaboration with U.S. legacy hardware brand Keeler Brass Company. Inspired by fine jewelry, the intricate details of this inspiration are evident in each product piece.

On the culinary front, we've partnered with Chef Edward Lee and his nonprofit, The LEE Initiative, to support young talent.

The LEE Initiative Women Culinary and Spirits Program selects women from across the country for a yearlong mentorship program, helping them explore various career paths in the culinary field and equipping them with the skills to navigate an often male-dominated industry.

For the past three years, Monogram has hosted these mentees at our Experience Center in Louisville, Kentucky, providing them with brand, media and partnership training to help shape and refine their personal brands for future success.

Who, in any industry or sphere, would you most like to share a long lunch with and where would you take them?

I have always admired Belgian fashion designer Diane von Furstenberg, not just for her impact to fashion and creating the iconic wrap dress that is flattering for all women but also her philanthropic work to empower women.

I'd love to take her to Sarabeth's near Central Park and hope we'd have an easy-flowing conversation, which would continue into a walk through the park on a beautiful day.

How do you get into the right mindset before a big meeting or presentation?

While I do not follow a script when presenting, I will often compose one to collect my thoughts. It is part of a process for me to ensure the story hits the right chord and accomplishes my intended goal.

On the day of the presentation, I will often arrive in the office early and find a place where I can run through my presentation and talking points, so I ensure the biggest and most salient points are communicated. Often, I will also play music in the background.



The first Monogram Designer Collection was released in January 2023. Image courtesy of Monogram

I am a big music fan and have found that music not only helps to provide an ambiance, but also influences my mood and outlook.

On your days off, what can you be found doing to relax or have some fun?

Cooking, travel and listening to music are some of my personal passions. I'm really lucky that my husband and two sons, aged 8 and 11, share these, so there is a lot of joy in being able to enjoy them together as a family.

We often remember our trips by not only the local adventures but also the culinary discoveries. When we are not traveling, I am that typical mom on the weekend chauffeuring my sons to their many activities!

What does luxury mean to you?

Luxury is personal. It is the emotion tied to an unforgettable experience or the ease brought by a product that makes life

seamless and effortless.

Luxury brands must deliver on these promises with flawless execution and meticulous attention to detail. This is the experience we strive to create for Monogram consumers.

Whether a product or service, what is your favorite luxury indulgence?

Travel and culinary experiences are my top indulgences and are even better when a cultural immersion is part of it!

From a product perspective, I love the bricks-and-mortar experience of stepping into a favorite boutique store and finding that perfect item that captivates my attention.

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