

COLUMNS

Luxury Unfiltered: The power of using training to unlock edge in turbulent times

July 31, 2024

*Daniel Langer is the founder and CEO of consulting firm quit*

By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

By **Daniel Langer**

I had the pleasure and privilege to train VIP sales teams of a leading luxury brand recently.

As in all recent trainings, I noticed how hard it was for the participants to unlearn established behaviors and, instead of “selling” in a more traditional way, connecting with clients on an emotional level. Finding the emotional connection is the key to unlocking the luxury edge for brands.

As luxury clients all over the world are raising their expectations, brands that are not ahead in investing in training will stay behind.

Luxury training’s critical role

In the world of luxury, the dichotomy between success and failure has never been more pronounced.

The best luxury brands, including Herms and Louis Vuitton, are setting the benchmark for the industry with one record-breaking quarter after another. In stark contrast, other brands are witnessing a significant decline in market share, revenue, profitability and overall desirability.

This divergence can largely be attributed to one key factor: a clear and consistent brand story and the organization’s depth of knowledge regarding luxury client insights, the drivers of extreme value and the art of creating a lasting impact. Without these, brands fail to generate enough desirability.

Selling luxury consistently and successfully is an arduous task, requiring a unique blend of deep insights and specialized skills. While every organization aspires to hire and retain exceptional talent, crafting an ecosystem that delivers an end-to-end luxury experience across all touchpoints demands strategy, systems, talent, situational awareness and executional excellence.

A single misstep can obliterate client relations, causing values to plummet and destroy desirability, and when clients break up with a brand, it is, in most cases, the fault of the brand, as a recent quantitative luxury study showed clearly that I conducted together with Adobe. Thus, clarity in roles and responsibilities is paramount, and all client-facing staff must be adept at recognizing and responding to clients’ emotional triggers.

My experience advising some of the most successful luxury brands globally has underscored the profound impact that luxury

training can have. Training enables organizations to create extreme value without altering their fundamental cost structures. This is why luxury training is a secret weapon that many underperforming brands have yet to leverage sufficiently.

Especially in times of uncertainty and crisis, luxury training becomes one of the most significant and fastest levers for organizational change. It serves as a key differentiator between thriving and struggling organizations.

One fascinating observation from my recent training sessions, as mentioned above, is the challenge sales representatives face in asking the right questions to identify and categorize clients in real-world in-store situations. While theoretical discussions on evoking emotional responses are straightforward, actual execution is incredibly difficult, even for seasoned professionals.

This is why ongoing training is indispensable for sales teams in the best organizations. Without it, even the most successful brands would quickly fall behind.

In times marked by unpredictability, the difference between consistently successful luxury brands and those who underperform hinges on knowledge and insight. The pitfalls often lie in the subtleties of brand experience, the ability to develop empathy toward clients, decoding luxury clients' emotional triggers and nurturing enduring client relationships.

Another critical factor is being aware of what really creates value for luxury clients. Even very experienced salespeople and brand ambassadors often lack the knowledge of the psychology behind luxury purchases, which goes far beyond "status."

Bridging the lifestyle gap

Another regular pain point is that many luxury sales ambassadors do not share the same lifestyle as their clients.

This disconnect makes it challenging to understand clients' daily life patterns, purchasing power and preferences. While aspirational luxury clients often seek brands that allow for visual identification, more established luxury clients prioritize aspects like time, community, inspiration and peace of mind.

This shift highlights the recent focus of luxury clients toward brands that deliver substantial client value and that can inspire. Sadly, the inspiration through the brand often collapses at the moment of truth when a brand ambassador and the client interact.

Without extensive and recurring training, it is nearly impossible for salespeople in different wealth and lifestyle situations to inspire and create desirability.

Training at all levels

Training is equally critical at the top management level. Luxury evolves so rapidly that failing to grasp the shifting expectations of Gen Z and the opportunities and threats posed by technologies like AI can quickly thrust brands into a downward spiral.

The speed of change is unprecedented, and many brands struggle to connect with their clients amidst intensifying competition, changing critical parameters, and escalating client demands. Exposing the C-suite to today's unprecedented changes and the expectations of tomorrow's clients is crucial for brand survival.

quit predicts that 50 percent of luxury brands will not survive the next decade, and for many, the warning signs are already evident.

Luxury is about the experience, emotion and exclusive, desire-inducing stories each brand must tell. Training in these areas is a survival necessity.

Delaying or underestimating the importance of training risks obsolescence in a world where client loyalty is won by those who dare to evolve faster and execute better, and loyalty requires performing exceptionally every single time. To inspire and surprise again and again, and to have a deep understanding of the clients' emotional worlds.

Luxury training is the enabler for brands navigating a volatile market environment. It equips organizations with the tools to create lasting value, build deep client connections and adapt swiftly to the fast-paced change that all luxury brands are exposed to.

As the industry continues to evolve, the brands that prioritize and invest in luxury training will be the ones that outperform and lead the way forward.

Luxury Unfiltered is a weekly column by *Daniel Langer*. He is the CEO of *quit*, a global luxury strategy and brand activation firm. He is recognized as a global top-five luxury key opinion leader. He serves as an executive professor of luxury strategy and

pricing at Pepperdine University in Malibu and as a professor of luxury at New York University, New York. Mr. Langer has authored bestselling books on luxury management in English and Chinese, and is a respected global keynote speaker.

Mr. Langer conducts masterclass management training on various luxury topics around the world. As a luxury expert featured on Bloomberg TV, Financial Times, The New York Times, Forbes, The Economist and others, Mr. Langer holds an MBA and a Ph.D. in luxury management, and has received education from Harvard Business School. Follow him on [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#).

© 2024 Reliance Relocation Services, Inc. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.