



2019 TOP WOMEN IN RETAIL

Women in Retail Leadership Circle's 9th Annual List of the Leading Female Executives in Retail





April 29 - May 1, 2019
Ritz-Carlton Key Biscayne | Miami

The **Women in Retail Leadership Summit** will host **350-plus leading women retail leaders** for two-and-a-half days of inspiration, education and connections with fellow executive women at leading retailers and brands.

Experience powerful presentations from women leaders; uncover new and innovative leadership strategies; and learn about the latest retail and technology trends. Share best practices with new contacts, discuss industry issues, and find inspiration on how to conquer challenges in both your personal and professional lives at this unique event.

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Editor's Note

HONORING THE 2019 TOP WOMEN IN RETAIL

Women in Retail Leadership Circle (WIRLC) is proud to present its ninth annual list of the top women executives in the retail industry.

Like the prior eight years, the 2019 Top Women in Retail list features a who's who in the industry. Honorees, some of whom were recommended via a survey of our WIRLC members and Inner Circle e-newsletter readers, were chosen based on several criteria, including position within a retail organization, scope of responsibility within that position, career achievements, and involvement within the retail industry.

The women featured in this year's issue are in the C-suite or are leaders of marketing, e-commerce, customer experience or digital teams. These women have helped their companies grow and thrive in an unsettled retail environment, built and managed great teams, launched new strategic initiatives, mentored colleagues, given back to the industry, and in many cases helped to raise families.

Use this special issue as a resource to learn more about these retail leaders, from the strategies they've implemented to help motivate their teams to the biggest challenges they've faced in their careers (and how they overcame them) to the latest retail technology trends they're tracking. Then, use their advice and experience to help guide your career.

We're especially excited about this year's list of Top Women in Retail because many of

the honorees will be in attendance or speaking at the sixth annual Women in Retail Leadership Summit (www.womeninretailsummit.com), which is taking place at the Ritz-Carlton, Key Biscayne, Miami, April 29-May 1.

Each year, attendees to the Summit get to experience powerful presentations from women leaders in the retail industry; uncover leadership strategies to help further their careers; learn about the latest retail trends and technologies; and pick up valuable insights on how to take their careers — and businesses — to the next level. Attendees share best practices with new contacts, discuss industry issues, and find inspiration on how to conquer challenges in both their personal and professional lives at this unique event.

We hope you enjoy this special supplement. Also, if you have any recommendations for women you would like to see featured next year (in our 10th annual issue!), please send me a note at mcampanelli@napco.com.



Melissa

Melissa Campanelli
mcampanelli@napco.com



Thoughts?

Think we missed someone from this year's list? Please let us know who by sending an email to mcampanelli@napco.com.



MARLA A. RYAN

CEO, DESTINATION MATERNITY

Why did you decide to pursue a career in retail?

From my earliest memory, I've always loved fashion and being around apparel. As I grew up and was exposed to the industry, it just felt like a natural fit. I love the thrill of a challenge and fixing a broken business as much as the excitement of a new season dropping and wondering if we made the right decisions.

Looking back, what advice would you have given yourself when you started in the retail industry?

Listen more, don't take yourself so seriously, stop to smell the roses, and remember to say thank you.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

Running a declining business where I couldn't control the environment. I had to partner with another company and build bridges with many team members to assist me in driving the business. It meant taking the time to educate them about my business as well as working together for success.

What one new retail technology or trend do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

Continued customer engagement, whether virtual reality (VR), live chat, among other channels. The retail industry needs to continue to embrace all technology that will allow the customer the most intimate experience possible with their brand.

Given the fast pace of the retail industry, what's your favorite way to relax?

Time away either skiing or at the beach with my family.

What are some strategies that you've used to motivate your team?

Being transparent, supportive and admitting when I'm wrong. I believe in taking the time to mentor members of the team, listening to all ideas, and empowering them to make decisions.

Within the past 12 months, what are some professional initiatives, projects or accomplishments that you're most proud of?

I took part in my first ever proxy fight and when we won, and I was named CEO of Destination Maternity. It has been a long-held dream to run a company and build a successful brand.

MELISSA REIFF

CEO, THE CONTAINER STORE

Why did you pursue a career in retail?

My focus and passion in college was law, and I received a degree in political science with full intention of attending law school. Never did I think I would have a career in retail. I'm so proud and grateful of my more than 30 years in this industry.

How do you motivate your team?

Communication. Being informed, valued and appreciated is the key to individual and team satisfaction and company results. Having a clear plan that the entire organization understands so that execution with excellence can occur is critical to success for all stakeholders.

Nothing makes a team feel more empowered and confident than an environment of trust and appropriate collaboration and transparency. Knowing and understanding the full picture of the direction the company is heading in and why, and the importance of their contribution and accountability to it, is key.

Within the past 12 months, what professional accomplishments are you most proud of?

The execution of our five-year strategic plan over these past 24 months. Our vision and purpose is alive and messaged. We have six defined strategic initiatives to improve our productivity and profitability. We continue to test and learn. An example is the current redesign of our flagship store in Dallas. We will continue to focus and develop our strongest differentiators, both in-store and online.

Looking back, what advice would you have given yourself when you started in retail?

I look back on the early days of my career and realize the importance of being resourceful; searching out and reading any

and all things related to the industry; asking questions, being unafraid to speak up with confidence and humility; and seeking out mentorship from multifarious individuals for advice and guidance.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

I accepted the CEO position a little more than two years ago. I've found this responsibility, this privilege to be all encompassing, very rewarding and very challenging. I have a love and capacity for both the strategic elements of running our business as well as the day-to-day details. However, I must continue to learn how BEST to self-manage my time for all stakeholders, and lead with strength, optimism and confidence in our teams.

What retail technology do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

Here are three: AI, cloud transformation (as it continues to evolve), and voice to computer. These will have an impact on customer experience (and more) in 2019 and beyond.

What's your favorite way to relax?

I love to read a great biography sitting on the beach or anywhere close to the water. I also feel very relaxed yet energized playing tennis.



SHARON LEITE

CEO, THE VITAMIN SHOPPE

Why did you decide to pursue a career in retail?

I actually fell into retail. I answered an ad for an assistant store manager position while I was going to college. I loved fashion, enjoyed utilizing my generous employee discount AND was able to earn money too! Seemed like a "win win" all the way around. I enjoyed helping customers find solutions for whatever they came into the store for as well as the pace and constant change of the retail environment. Whether it was re-setting the floor, receiving a shipment or hiring a new associate, the ability to drive a business was exciting to me. The first time I earned the keys to my own store as a store manager, I knew I was hooked!

What are some strategies that you've used to motivate your team?

I think it's important to get to know the individual. Understand what makes them tick, what's important to them. In doing so, you can determine how best to go about engaging and inspiring the individual or team to do their best work. Figure out how you can help them with the resources they need to accomplish the goal, remove barriers, help them be successful. Reinforce the good in what they're doing so they keep doing more of it. Make sure they know that what they do contributes to the overall goal(s) of the organization and how it makes a difference.

Within the past 12 months, what are some professional initiatives, projects or accomplishments that you're most proud of?

I'm most excited about my recent move to The Vitamin Shoppe, and the opportunity to lead the organization. I'm really proud of the organization's commitment to help our customer be "their best self," however they define it. I'm inspired by our health enthusiasts and their commitment to our company's mission of helping others with innovative products aiding them on their journey.

Looking back, what advice would you have given yourself when you started in the retail industry?

Stay curious, always learn, and never stop! It's so important as a leader that you continue to grow to ensure you can keep up with the pace of change and be able to help your team through it.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

The biggest challenge I've faced in my career was when my value system and the company I was working for at the time were misaligned. During the time I worked for this company I was miserable. I dreaded going to work because I always felt my belief system was being compromised. What I learned from this was the importance of company culture, feeling valued in the workplace, enjoying the people I worked with and for, and the ability to contribute in a high-quality way to delivering the organization's goals.

What one new retail technology or trend do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

I think personalization is critical to the customer experience. It's more than putting someone's first name in an email; it's the ability to address the customer how they choose as well as customize content based on their purchase history. On the product side, building your own product or assembling a combination of products just for you, how you define it, will be key. Lastly, with the use of beacons, mobile point of sale, and Bluetooth technologies, retailers can greet customers by their name from the moment they walk in the store, and tailor the conversation based on what they're looking for.

Given the fast pace of the retail industry, what's your favorite way to relax?

I enjoy spending time with my family and closest friends. Nothing like catching up with the people that mean the most to you. I love to travel to new places and explore new and different cultures.



KATIE FINNEGAN

FOUNDING PRINCIPAL, STORE NO. 8; CEO, SPATIALAND

Why did you decide to pursue a career in retail?

I was raised in retail. From the age of eight, I was sitting in on conference calls with my dad, who was an executive at the Gap for most of my childhood. I caught the bug early. This early exposure inspired me, and I went on to work in merchandising at J.Crew out of college. While my career has had a somewhat twisted path (whose hasn't?), the one consistent thread has been my passion for the customer experience — physical or digital. The “100 tiny touchpoints” that make an experience magical is what drives me to continue to think differently and constantly reinvent the customer journey.

What are some strategies that you've used to motivate your team?

Motivation starts with transparency. Every month, I gather my entire team and lay out key milestones, shifts, and my intended focus for the next four weeks. I find this keeps us all grounded and unified in our purpose and collective mission as a company. I firmly believe that if you don't know the “why” of your CEO's goals, it's almost impossible to stay motivated. Transparency and context are key.

On a more day-to-day basis, I aim to make my top-of-mind insights visible in real time. I fly at least once a week, so I use this airtime to catch up on articles across the retail, management, leadership and tech spaces. Anything relevant to a problem we're solving or a new opportunity we can explore, I share with the team.

Within the past 12 months, what are some professional initiatives, projects or accomplishments that you're most proud of?

When we established Store No. 8 back in March 2017, we made our mission very clear: ignite the change that changes everything. Since then, we've incubated three startups (Jetblack, Spatial&, and a company in stealth), each driving commerce forward by developing radical innovations like personalized voice commerce and immersive merchandising through virtual reality. I'm proud of the pace and speed with which we've established these startups, especially having done so as part of a Fortune 1 retailer.

Looking back, what advice would you have given yourself when you started in the retail industry?

I'd say, “In order to be successful, you have to WANT to wake up every day and get to work. The easiest way to do this: do what you love.” I see so many people making career calculations, considering “I need to do x so I can ultimately do y, and z will look great on my resume.” My question is always: “Why not do what you want to do right now?” I can't imagine putting 110 percent of my effort into a career or project I don't want to be in. You may not love every task, but if you're drawn to the mission and the North Star, the rest will fall into place over time.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

Throughout my career, I always took pride in working harder and smarter than everyone around me. But then I realized something that ultimately led me to make the shift from being a strong contributor to being a people leader. To meet the big, future-changing goals I wanted to accomplish, I'd have to focus my efforts on motivating others to work harder and smarter than everyone around them, not on doing it all myself. This pivot from “doing” to “leading” was challenging. However, once I changed, I immediately saw the intrinsic motivation, team satisfaction, and quality and speed of work accelerate seemingly overnight.

What one new retail technology or trend do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

At Store No. 8, my focus is on tech and shifts in the customer experience that will revolutionize retail five [years], 10 years from now. However, in the near term, I'm excited to see the positive impact AI and personalization will continue to have on the customer experience, specifically in terms of streamlining the customer journey. Trimming the fat, so to speak.

For example, a customer should never have to filter through 25 pages of a website to find the three products that are relevant to them. This time spent “filtering” should be spent exploring each product, understanding its value, and determining if it's right for them. I think the proliferation of AI will drive this in 2019.

Given the fast pace of the retail industry, what's your favorite way to relax?

For someone obsessed with consumer behavior and what makes people tick, I don't shop much. The irony of this isn't lost on me, but after thinking about shopping and retail all day, my favorite way to relax is either to sleep or exercise — preferably both. Eight solid hours of sleep and Pilates or Soul Cycle are the ideal combination. I was a Division I swimmer in college, so starting the day with exercise is a habit I still have.



CLAIRE SPOFFORD

PRESIDENT, CORNERSTONE

Why did you pursue a career in retail?

Connecting consumers to brands by creating experiences has always been interesting to me, and retail is where the rubber meets the road. The constantly evolving environment means that things never get boring!

How do you motivate your team?

I believe establishing a clear strategic direction, focusing the team on the right set of goals and objectives, and being transparent and communicative is the best form of motivation. People want to be part of something successful and know that they played a part in creating that success.

Within the past 12 months, what professional accomplishments are you most proud of?

We've worked hard to develop a real sense of community across the leadership teams at Cornerstone Brands. I'm really proud of the team I've been able to put into place, as well as the open collaboration and sharing of best practices we've done across our brands.

What advice would you have given yourself when you started in retail?

Stay open minded and take risks!

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

Working in an environment where I wasn't able to have any autonomy. I've learned that when you're working somewhere when there's not a cultural fit, it's very difficult to do your best work. At Qurate Retail Group, relationships have been at the heart of each of our businesses, and connections with our team members and vendors drive our success. Each relationship is unique, and so is each of our brands.

What retail technology or trend do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

Creating unique experiences for your customer. Those that don't evolve and drive differentiation for their brands and their products will never win in an environment where the big guys will dominate volume. We deliver a curated, discovery-driven experience that's powered by the spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation, both within our organization and among the brands we offer.

What's your favorite way to relax?

Hiking or walks in the woods with my family, friends and our dogs. My friends and I call these therapy walks!



SUZANNE MIGLUCCI

PRESIDENT AND CEO, CHARLES & COLVARD

Why did you decide to pursue a career in retail?

I was previously in the e-commerce tech space and was called upon to serve on the board for Charles & Colvard. As I was onboarding, the then CEO resigned and I was recruited to the role of president and CEO. I recognized the tremendous opportunity to morph a very traditional manufacturer into a direct-to-consumer, omnichannel brand.

How do you motivate your team?

Recruit the best people for each role and our current strategy, and then empower them to do their jobs well. From a strategic perspective, I set the big picture and rely on them to successfully execute on those initiatives and achieve our desired outcomes. By empowering them to make key decisions, they're motivated to take ownership and drive results for the business and its shareholders.

Within the past 12 months, what professional accomplishments are you most proud of?

Our company's pivot to building direct customer relationships. Since the launch of our new brand and e-commerce site, we've seen a significant uptick in brand recognition and online sales. We've invested in the right technologies that allow us to scale our business and offer the best customer experience possible. As a result, we have fantastic customer engagement in all channels and a better ROI than ever before.

Looking back, what advice would you have given yourself when you started in the retail industry?

I would take a page out of my e-commerce and software development playbook and apply it to Charles & Colvard. Retail is fast-

changing, and savvy brands need to build dynamic models that can change as fast as consumers' preferences evolve. We now embrace product releases in sprints and employ agile development techniques that are helping us navigate the convergence of e-commerce and retail.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

Managing the expectations of shareholders while continuing to strategically grow the business. The Street tends to measure performance on a quarterly basis, yet the business is focused on long-term goals. If I focus long term, we're better positioned to build a healthy business and ultimately deliver shareholder value.

What retail technology or trend do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

Sustainability. Today's consumers desire sustainable products and brands that serve a bigger purpose. This is especially true in the jewelry industry, where there's so much focus on the chain of custody of goods.

Given the fast pace of retail, what's your favorite way to relax?

Online shopping, of course!





NANCY GREEN

PRESIDENT AND CEO, ATHLETA

Why did you decide to pursue a career in retail?

It took leaving retail for me to realize I wanted to make it my career. I'd worked in stores growing up and after college. I thrived working with customers and solving their problems. Then I left retail and became a stylist in New York. It was incredibly exciting; I was working with celebrities, models and top designers. I felt like it should be a dream job, but it wasn't the right fit for me. I realized I missed retail and the direct connection with customers. Gap Inc. recruited me on an airplane, and I've now spent a total of 25 years with the company, working at Gap and Old Navy before coming to Athleta. Coming to Gap Inc., I had a real connection with the values the Fisher family stood for. I'm proud to work for a company that has made style and quality accessible, and that has stood up for doing the right thing since it was founded nearly 50 years ago.

What are some strategies that you've used to motivate your team?

I have four adult children. One of the biggest lessons from raising them is learning that different people respond to different motivational styles, and I embrace that when nurturing talent. That said, one thing I'd say motivates everyone at Athleta is a sense of purpose. I think everyone I speak with, from my leadership team to our newest employees, is driven by our mission to inspire women and girls to reach their limitless potential. Different companies and brands stand for different things, but a sense of purpose is one of the most powerful motivators I know.

Within the past 12 months, what are some professional initiatives, projects or accomplishments that you're most proud of?

In 2018, Athleta earned B Corp Certification. It reflects a commitment across our organization to be a force for good. Pursuing B Corp was inspired by our mission, by our commitment to sustainability. I'm incredibly proud of the work we're doing — our opportunity to collaborate with and positively influence the industry — and for all that's to come, since this is just the beginning.

Looking back, what advice would you have given yourself when you started in the retail industry?

Don't be afraid of imperfection. Perfection can slow you down and prevent great. Things will rarely go as planned, so get ready to learn quickly and adjust quickly on the upside or the downside. If you use good judgement and guide yourself and others by good values, work with good partners, and use good business discipline, something great will come of it.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

It's hard to imagine now, but when I had my first child, I was a merchant and there were very few women with children in jobs like mine. I wasn't sure how I could have a child and manage a busy, travel-heavy job. I wasn't sure I could come back after my maternity leave. I reached out to a Gap executive who had children. Her advice was pretty simple: she told me to just try. She gave me some advice about managing life, but most importantly, she said to come back and give it a few months. She reminded me that I could always leave if it didn't work, but I'd never know if I didn't try. Two decades later, I have four adult children and my dream job as CEO of Athleta. This had a major influence on how I approach leadership and culture. It's incredibly important to me to foster an environment that supports women who want to have families and big careers.

What one new retail technology or trend do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

I think the most critical thing our industry can embrace in 2019 — and beyond — is sustainability. I'm proud of the work Athleta and Gap Inc. are doing, but there isn't a company out there that can protect the planet alone.

Given the fast pace of the retail industry, what's your favorite way to relax?

My favorite way to relax is to move! I'm lucky enough to live with amazing Bay Area hiking trails nearby, and I get out as often as I can. I also practice yoga, which grounds me in a mind-body connection.

KATIE MULLEN

CHIEF TRANSFORMATION OFFICER, NEIMAN MARCUS

Why did you decide to pursue a career in retail?

I'm fascinated with the juxtaposition of art and science in retail. In college, I studied sociology because I was intrigued by why people do the things they do. That also allows you to quickly understand what you can do to change those choices. I started my career with that question of why do people make the choices that they make as a guiding inspiration. It took me years and another stint back in school to figure out that retail was the best industry to allow me to work on changing consumer behaviors, and to do it quickly enough to see impact immediately. And I didn't come to retail directly; I came via management consulting, which I think has helped me always keep in mind the art of the possible as well as how other industries would solve similar problems.

What are some tactics you use to motivate your team?

I believe teams are motivated by understanding the bigger picture and what we're all driving to. I spend a lot of time talking with my teams not only about what we're doing and how we're doing it, but also why we're doing it. The more my teams share that vision and really feel that logic, the better they can all work together and accelerate our agenda. I also believe that everyone is motivated by developing in the ways that matter to them. I work with all my teams to ensure that I understand and am supporting their personal professional development goals as well as my goals for them. Finally, I believe we bring our whole selves to our work, not just our best selves. I make sure my team sees my weaknesses as well as my strengths, and hears me talk honestly about what challenges me. That makes it a lot easier to solve problems collectively, admit when things we tried didn't work, and also save more of our energy on getting better.

Within the past 12 months, what professional accomplishments are you most proud of?

We've defined and begun actively pursuing a business transformation agenda. We made tough choices about what to invest in and what not to, and we've seen fantastic progress on those decisions. We've changed the way we work as well. More cross-functional, more digital, more agile, more specifically focused on desired outcomes. I'm quite proud of both of those given how foundational they both are and how much both are changing the way we do business.

Looking back, what advice would you have given yourself when you started in the retail industry?

I've been lucky enough to have great mentors who have given me this advice many times:

1. Collect and nurture mentoring relationships. People usually embrace having their opinion asked and sharing their accumulated wisdom. They're never offended by your asking.
2. Focus on doing really, really great work. The better the quality of your work is, the easier everything else is.
3. Don't assume there's one path to get where you're going. Be open to the new opportunities that might look a bit tangential. They're often the ones that stretch you in ways you haven't been before — as long as you're always looking for the learning opportunity in them.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

As a mom of three small children, one of my biggest challenges is the ongoing struggle to balance doing the right thing for them at the same time as pursuing my career and passion. At different points in my kids' lives, it has meant forgoing the most logical opportunities to take ones with less impact on them. At other points it has meant asking my husband to take on more so I could do more at work. It's never without trade-offs (and sometimes tears), but I've learned (to try) to never regret my choices and to always remember how lucky I am to have those choices. And, of course, if something isn't working, name it and address it, but don't assume it can't also get better with time.

What one new retail technology or trend do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

I expect both AI and RFID to begin having outsized impact. Both allow us to solve both customer and business problems faster and more elegantly than we could otherwise, but they require real investment, which has made retailers slower to adopt them than we should have. Those that figure out how to monetize these and don't just try "me too" participation or dipping toes in the water will get enormous value.

What's your favorite way to relax?

Most of my rejuvenation/recharging time is spent chasing three little kids around. Because I want to spend as much time with them as possible, I do a lot of reading aloud, playing Legos, and putting my feet up at playgrounds.





STEPHANIE PUGLIESE

PRESIDENT AND CEO, DULUTH TRADING COMPANY

Why did you pursue a career in retail?

I've always loved clothing and the store experience. As a lifestyle brand retailer, you get to tell a story to your customers, provide them with quality product that says something about who they are, and give them a rewarding social experience. It's a fun way to be creative and utilize business acumen.

Looking back, what advice would you have given yourself when you started in the retail industry?

Keep learning and find great mentors. That's always great advice.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

I think the challenge we all face in this business is that it's moving quickly and much of our success is dependent on anticipating many different customers' needs at the same time. I've learned to take a step back at times and try to edit the less important "stuff" so that we can do the important things well.

What one new retail technology or trend do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

Mobile will continue to be a huge force in the way customers shop. By having that "always on" mentality, it forces us to be very real time in our information, cut through the noise of the competition, and constantly reduce friction in the buying experience. It also raises the bar for customer communication, as they expect to have updated information at their fingertips.

What's your favorite way to relax?

I love to garden, cook, run and practice yoga. But nothing compares to family dinners with my husband and three kids. We're Italian, so there's a lot of good food at the table! My kids make me a better person in every way.



MICHELLE M. FARABAUGH

CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, HARRY & DAVID

Why did you decide to pursue a career in retail?

I started my career in retail doing what we now know as CRM. Being both right- and left-brained, I love the combination of art and science that drives retail. I've worked in retail for almost 30 years, and love the fast pace, continual challenges, and ongoing opportunities to learn and grow that it brings. Marketing has changed more in the past few decades than almost any other area of retail. I don't mind change; in fact, I embrace it and thrive in it. I love observing the constant evolution of customer expectations and figuring out how to reach them. As a retailer, if you aren't innovating, you won't be staying ahead of the competition.

What are some strategies that you've used to motivate your team?

I'm really passionate about the brands I've managed, the loyal customers that shop them, and the people I've been privileged to work with. I naturally have a very collaborative management style. Leading with a combination of passion and collaboration is contagious and can really help motivate team members. I've found that listening to individuals and encouraging them to share their thoughts and ideas can be incredibly inspiring to help them grow in their talents.

I'm a very results-oriented and fun-loving person; my team and I work hard, but we have fun doing it. During peak season, when stress and demands are at their highest, we have Photo Fun Day Fridays for co-workers to participate in if they choose, with themes such as crazy hair day, ugly sweater day, team spirit day, etc. We also gather together as a team each month to make sure everyone has the same vision and to share the wins from within our various departments. When you celebrate the small wins, they soon add up to big wins! We also present a Shine Award to a worthy team member each month, making sure to thank them for their specific contributions to the entire team. This recognition in front of their peers goes a long way.

Within the past 12 months, what professional accomplishments are you most proud of?

As an organization, we've gone through a cultural and digital transformation. We've launched a brand-new mobile site and added many user experience enhancements to our desktop website. Additionally, we've rebranded Harry & David's image and positioning around "Share More" and launched our new Harry & David® Gourmet brand.

Our new positioning and brand launch allow us to appeal to a broader range of consumers and cultivate meaningful relationships through year-round, two-way communication. We're engaging customers by sharing what really matters to us and encouraging them to share more about what really matters to them.

It has been great to see our team come together and create new marketing, videos and communication that are already resonating inside and outside of the company. Consumers want to learn about the exquisite pears we grow and manage from branch to basket.

They have loved our Humans of Harry & David series that features associates from different areas throughout the company, giving an inside look at the talent and passion they have for what they do. The user-generated content has been wonderful as well, from babies "ooing" and "hashing" over our catalogs and people opening our wonderful gifts, to entire songs being written about our incredible products — gourmet goodies that we make with our hands and our hearts so that they may be thoroughly enjoyed by others. It brings a smile to my face and makes me proud of our team to see the progress we've been able to make in such a short amount of time.

Looking back, what advice would you have given yourself when you started in the retail industry?

I know it sounds cliché, but I would have told myself not to sweat the small stuff. Not everything is big, but it can sometimes feel like everything is. It's helpful to pause, step back, and think about the impact that issue or project has on the business. I'm a perfectionist, but the reality is I can't make everything perfect. What I can do is prioritize, focus when there are big issues, and not sweat the small stuff.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

I'm from the East Coast. When I first moved to the West Coast more than 20 years ago, I realized how vastly different the cultures were between the two. It took me some time to recognize and dissect these differences so I could adjust my approach and leadership style. Every company, whether East Coast, West Coast, or anywhere in between, has a unique culture. To be an effective leader, you need to adapt your approach to the DNA of the business to get the team behind you, to create momentum, and to achieve the specific goals for that company.

What one new retail technology or trend do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

You must put the customer at the center of all decisions. They're driving the trends, not retailers. Business intelligence and consumer insights are incredibly important. Many retailers focus on the tactics they're using with consumers. You really must think about how people feel and consider the customer's emotional connection to the brand through every touchpoint along their journey. A seamless and personalized customer experience will be key.

What's your favorite way to relax?

I love sailboat racing with my husband, Ross. There's no better feeling than the sun on your face and wind in your sails. I'm a wee bit competitive, so I love the challenge of it, too.



MARY VAN PRAAG

BRAND PRESIDENT, SOMA, CHICO'S FAS

Why did you decide to pursue a career in retail?

I started working in college at a woman's clothing store, then a jewelry store. My career began in sales, selling consumer products. What I love most is interacting with the customer, selling, developing and marketing to women!

Looking back, what advice would you have given yourself when you started in the retail industry?

Get profit & loss and international experience as soon as you can. You can do this by switching from line management to general management.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

Ensure your values match the business culture. Not everything works out the way you expect, so learn from it. You can be the same person, but the situation can bring out your best self, enabling your leadership to shine.

What one new retail technology or trend do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

We're launching a new engagement tool to digitize personal service. The Client Book provides digital clienteling tools and apps for our boutique associates to personalize and enhance customer experience. The SOMAINNOFIT app is a new technology for bra-fit measurement, recommending a personal, curated assortment for the perfect Soma fit.

What's your favorite way to relax?

I love to experience the arts. Whether it's attending a Broadway play, visiting a botanical garden or museum, or experiencing some pop culture, it helps me balance my left brain/right brain.

How do you motivate your team?

I ask, "What's possible?" "How will we measure success?" and "What's in our way?" This framework sets an inspiring vision to allow a team to create new possibilities. Then I help resource growth through new capabilities. I value diversity and bring talent to the forefront by challenging people to be their best. I do this through open discussion forums, collaborative team meetings, and more.

Within the past 12 months, what professional accomplishments are you most proud of?

Creating a compelling market position in the intimates space, sourcing new talent, and positioning the leadership team with a long-range plan for growth. I've set the course with an innovation road map, a digital-first mentality, and created new consumer experiences, specifically the Soma Fit Revolution. Soma recently launched its first-ever bra fit technology that enables a customer to find the perfect fit (size and style) from our Soma bra assortment.

SAMANTHA LEE

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICER, TAILORED BRANDS

Why did you pursue a career in retail?

I've taken an unconventional path in my retail career. Early on, I worked in financial services and product management. Then, I started my own business, and was later a marketing consultant. Fortunately, 10 years ago, one of my childhood dreams came true when I was given the opportunity to build an e-commerce business for Sanrio, the Hello Kitty company. The magnitude of change at the aggressive pace we needed to operate in order to grow was new for the organization. When it felt overwhelming at times, I'd remind them (and myself) that at the end of the day, we're making our fans super excited about the great products of characters they love so much by truly living up to the "small gift, big smile" tagline. I discovered my passion for retail through this experience.

How do you motivate your team?

Making each meeting and interaction matter is paramount. As a leader, when you show you care by being present, authentic, transparent and delivering on your promises, it establishes trust and credibility. It's critical for leaders to paint a picture and lead the way. This will instill confidence, whereby your team will be excited to be along for the ride because they believe in you and your leadership.

Investing time with the team in the right moments is also key. All my success has been through the high performance of my teams. Finally, having fun together as a team. Create team gatherings with activities that promote active engagement, including silly ones that lead to lots of laughter. When people get to know one another, it's amazing how much they help motivate and lift each other up.

Within the past 12 months, what professional accomplishments are you most proud of?

We launched a new enterprise-level innovation initiative that created a new way of driving customer experience by leveraging our expert in-store wardrobe consultants to provide personalized style advice to our online customers. Not only did it

unlock long-term value creation opportunities, we were able to implement this program at scale in one of the most aggressive and shortest timelines compared with past initiatives.

I'm proud of how our company, especially our stores team, which embraced being outside of its comfort zone, adopted new innovative technology, tested, learned and moved faster than it has ever had to in the past.

I'm proud of my team and their do-whatever-it-takes attitude. This past year, we had an aggressive list of initiatives to enhance the online and omnichannel experiences for two brands. Not only did the team deliver on time, we're seeing significant positive reads in some of these initiatives as well as gaining key learnings that will drive new opportunities.

This past September, I was named senior vice president, chief digital officer at Tailored Brands. What I'm most excited about is having this opportunity to represent diversity and to show others that anything is possible if you put your mind and hard work to it.

Looking back, what advice would you have given yourself when you started in the retail industry?

Tomorrow is a new day. Don't overthink. Don't dwell. Learn and move on.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

Five years after college, I decided to leave a successful corporate career to pursue a personal passion by starting my own small business. My friends and family thought I was crazy for giving up a promising career, but I was determined to give it a try. The product was beautifully handmade art glass sold in high-end art galleries and esteemed national museum shops. Our timing was off from the get-go, with major events every year impacting the consumer market and/or supply chain. The biggest let down and saddest moment was realizing and admitting that we couldn't scale the business enough to reach our own financial goals. It was one of the toughest and most humbling experiences in my career. I learned so much through that journey, however, including how resilient I could be. All the learnings from that experience greatly contributed to my current success and the leader I've become.

What retail technology or trend do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

I believe there are several that will greatly influence retail in 2019 and beyond, including:

- offering hyperpersonalized experiences to power discovery and purchase decision making;
- tying online and in-store for frictionless shopping experiences;
- delivering ease and speed with next-level convenience solutions; and
- leveraging the power of storytelling to create emotional connections with consumers in the places where they're spending their time.

If picking one, I think social channels will continue to redefine the competitive retail landscape, both posing a challenge as well as an opportunity to differentiate and win. The likes of Instagram and Facebook completely lowered the barrier of entry for new players to build a recognizable brand for a very large audience within months or even weeks. Social is where consumers are spending their time and consuming large amounts of content. When they choose with whom or where they'll engage, it's critical for retailers to reimagine how to speak and resonate with consumers in these mediums.

What's your favorite way to relax?

My family is everything to me. I love traveling with my husband and our two kids. I also enjoy sharing great food and wine with my parents, siblings and their families. To unwind and recharge, I love going to the spa. To give my "work brain" a rest, I enjoy reading and watching movies, especially period pieces.

CHRISTINE BUSCARINO

FORMER SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, E-COMMERCE AND MARKETING, ADRIANNA PAPELL

Why did you decide to pursue a career in retail?

I've always been passionate about the customer and helping them find products and solutions for their needs. I believe that front-line associates that interact with customers every day understand customer need better than anyone else, and I've always been drawn to developing businesses that solve for that.

What strategies have you used to motivate your team?

I've always made myself visible and approachable. I've encouraged them to come talk to me, whether it to be just run an idea past me or to be open and honest about when they need guidance or direction. I've encouraged them to think big, but ensure that their ideas are also achievable. There's no better feeling than being able to implement what you've developed and then measure it. I work hard and have fun, which I've found has always kept the team motivated and willing to be just as all in as I am every day. I've found that being part of their day-to-day has been more effective than any team event or other tactic that attempts to build and motivate teams.

Within the past 12 months, what are some professional initiatives, projects or accomplishments that you're most proud of?

I'm most proud of the multiple tests we've put out into the market at Adrianna Papell — all very new but designed to solve for customer need and the evolving digital space. Our customer, like many, has adopted mobile as their primary tool to review our assortment. We've designed new initiatives after focus groups of our customers have told us they're very much in need of.

Looking back, what advice would you have given yourself when you started in the retail industry?

I've always been fortunate that I started my career as a retail store associate prior to joining corporate. I've found that my time with the customer has been a better education and training than any other time in my over 22-year career. It has helped me develop best-in-class product, solutions and marketing geared towards customer need. I wish more retailers forced their associates to spend time with the customer this way as well. I think more brands would be successful in solving for customer need if this was part of their onboarding and regular training. Therefore, I guess the advice is less for me but more for others starting out their careers in this industry, or really any industry.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

I'd say the biggest challenge in my career was stepping out of my comfort zone, managing day-to-day digital and marketing at Office Depot, and entering a more strategic role developing new business models and cross-channel solutions for customers with the same company. It was that moment when my stomach turned and I got uncomfortable, but it was the smartest career move I made. It allowed me to take the best of my previous experience and turn it into new solutions for our organization.

What one new retail technology or trend do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

We all talk about it, but none of us have really perfected it — using artificial intelligence (AI) to drive personalization. Our customers want genuine and relevant product recommendations, marketing, etc., and the brand that accomplishes this first I believe will break through. It's been a topic for a long time, but I think coming soon you'll start to see brands getting better at it and measuring impact.

Given the fast pace of the retail industry, what's your favorite way to relax?

I chuckle a little every time I'm asked this question. I think we all need to be able to master how to be great at our jobs and our personal lives. Neither should have to sacrifice for the other. I think finding that happy medium and allowing myself to spend time with my family, whether it be on a vacation or just watching a simple movie together, has helped me find some level of relaxation amid the crazy and fast-paced career I have.



MARY CAMPBELL

CHIEF MERCHANDISING OFFICER, QURATE RETAIL GROUP; CHIEF COMMERCE OFFICER, QVC US

Why did you decide to pursue a career in retail?

Early on in my career, I accepted an internship in HR, but was ultimately needed in merchandising. I've always been a passionate shopper and curious about the customer and their evolving preferences, so merchandising felt like the perfect fit.

Since joining QVC in 1991 as an associate buyer in merchandising, I've never lost sight of the importance of always starting with great product. It's all about finding unique items that make a difference for our customers, and then bringing those items to life through the power of storytelling across all of our platforms.

What are some strategies that you've used to motivate your team?

I always encourage the team to stay focused on the customer. She's changing at an incredibly rapid pace, becoming more tech savvy, more confident, and more plugged in than ever before. That's why at Qurate Retail we're constantly innovating, coming up with new ways to reach her, to connect with her, and to deliver products and experiences that enrich her life. We're also looking ahead to our future customer — digital natives. We need to push and challenge ourselves to stay relevant to this next-generation shopper.

Within the past 12 months, what are some professional initiatives, projects or accomplishments that you're most proud of?

We continue to make digital investments to create immersive video commerce experiences on all platforms that resonate with consumers across generations. In July 2018, Qurate Retail launched two beauty micro-brands — Ellie

Sugar and Fuss Beauty — via dedicated Facebook, Instagram and web pages, powered by social media advertising alone. Also, our innovation team is focused on distribution channels like YouTube, Instagram TV and iTunes for longer-form content and original stories designed to build top-of-the-purchase-funnel engagement with new and current customers. We recently launched two digitally native shows focused on storytelling, which are exclusively available on YouTube, IGTV, Facebook Watch and Roku.

Looking back, what advice would you have given yourself when you started in the retail industry?

I would tell her it's OK to be exploratory and deviate from her initial plan. While your career may take twists and turns, if you stay curious and passionate, you'll remain relevant and can cultivate a truly fulfilling career.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

As a QVC and now Qurate Retail team member for more than 20 years, I've made a number of transitions throughout my career. For me, I learned early on that being too focused on the next promotion or the next raise was actually counter to my true development. I discovered that lateral moves made sense for our integrated business strategy, as well as for my professional development. When it comes to navigating a career path, you have to be willing to take risks, not only into roles that are familiar, but also into those that aren't. The more you're able to experience, and the more leaders and team members with whom you interact, the more you get to learn! You can also build credibility and trust through your interactions and willingness to support others in their roles.

What one new retail technology or trend do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

With more consumers using voice-activated technology in their daily lives, we recently introduced our first skill on the Alexa platform that allows customers to interact with us by voice. The first iteration of the skill, which launched in October, enables users to watch or listen to HSN live and obtain information about HSN's broadcast and products. By early 2019, our customers will be able to order products from the live broadcast, search for and order other items from the full product assortment, and check on shipping updates as well as other account details, all via voice. We see voice-activated technology as a new way for Qurate Retail to build relationships with our customers via real-time dialogue.

Given the fast pace of the retail industry, what's your favorite way to relax?

I enjoy spending time with and shopping with my teenage daughter. She helps keep me plugged into the latest products and trends resonating with young women.

NEELA MONTGOMERY

CEO, CRATE & BARREL HOLDINGS, INC.

Why did you pursue a career in retail?

My decision was influenced by a professor at INSEAD. I've always enjoyed the fast pace of retail and the customer focus — the ability to make an immediate impact on business results and to learn from so many customer interactions each day.

How do you motivate your team?

My team is excited about the future of retail and our ability to shape and influence it. I believe this moment demands high standards of ourselves and those around us. I stress having a shared vision, a passion for the customer, and authenticity.

Within the past 12 months, what accomplishments are you most proud of?

In 2018, we launched the Crate and Kids category and a new focus on small spaces to design a brand that's for all life stages. We launched the Crate and Barrel Credit Card to offer more for our loyal customers. We expanded our Design Studio services, translating Crate and Barrel's design credibility into more customer value. We partnered with Zola to share our product with a new customer. We began to test automation and other tools to improve productivity throughout the supply chain. We also embarked on a cultural transformation, launching new values to direct how we work. Lastly, we announced a new charitable partnership with VOW to help empower girls around the world.

Looking back, what advice would you have given yourself when you started in the retail industry?

I chose to take a nonlinear career path that has been defined more by learning than upward progression and perfection. However, I would have advised myself to seek global experiences, to get as much as I could when I could. I also would have told myself to not only embrace technology, but also learn about it from the best.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

I learned to be less deferential and more authentic in whatever space I was positioned. During that process, I began to trust my instincts and decisions. Also, as a working mother, I'm recognizing that you have to give up control and perfection.

What one new retail technology or trend do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

Augmented reality. People want to see products in their own rooms. We've already begun to use AR, however, 2019 will be the year of customer adoption and scale.

What's your favorite way to relax?

I exercise, listen to several podcasts, including The Economist. I will also occasionally binge watch a Netflix series.



MICHELLE KELLY

CEO, LILLY PULITZER

Why did you pursue a career in retail?

I loved the Lilly Pulitzer brand, and was inspired by meeting the owners of the brand at the time (back in 2003!).

How do you motivate your team?

My team is incredibly passionate about delighting our customers, so the best motivation is finding and sharing stories about our customers. We're so fortunate to hear moving stories from many of our customers about how the brand has made them happier or more confident.

Within the past 12 months, what professional accomplishments are you most proud of?

The grand opening of our Worth Avenue flagship, which coincided perfectly with the kickoff of the brand's 60th anniversary celebration. We hosted a beautiful fashion presentation showing the current season and upcoming spring collection and threw an incredibly fun party right on the iconic Worth Avenue in Palm Beach, where the brand originally began. The collections looked gorgeous and the store is a beautiful flagship experience.

Looking back, what advice would you have given yourself when you started in the retail industry?

Spend less time in meetings and more time interacting with customers.

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career, and what did you learn from it?

Building a team is simultaneously the most wonderful part and the most challenging part of being a leader. In our industry, a brand is only as strong as the people who are dreaming up and delivering beautiful products and services to the customer. I've learned to hire primarily for passion, curiosity and authentic respect for the brand.

What one new retail technology or trend do you believe will have the biggest impact in 2019, and why?

I still think we haven't seen the "ceiling" of how important mobile will be. Recently, I went two weeks without turning on my laptop. Plenty of shopping and work still occurred, it was just all on my phone. That behavior would have been unfathomable to me as recently as six months ago. Also, I think we're seeing very exciting new approaches to the convergence of digital and physical communities. People are building real and meaningful relationships over social media, and then they want to meet up! Usually there's a shared interest or lifestyle preference that sparked the social media connection in the first place. I think brands have a wonderful opportunity to be really creative in how we engage in these meetups.

What's your favorite way to relax?

I love to cook, and find it very relaxing and centering. It must be all the chopping and stirring! The more I need to relax, the more challenging my cooking endeavors are likely to be.



BECOME A MEMBER

The **Women in Retail Leadership Circle (WIRLC)** is a unique, members-only association that offers enterprise-level women in the retail industry a place to learn, connect and grow.

Focused on both **personal and executive leadership development**, WIRLC offers members the opportunity to share best practices, discuss industry issues and find inspiration on how to conquer challenges in their professional and personal lives.

Our community is comprised of **successful, motivated and passionate women from the retail world** who have a strong belief that investing in themselves and in other women is good business. From CEOs with years of experience to founders of start-ups introducing disruptive technology, the common thread is women coming together to learn from each other and help each other succeed.

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