

NORDSTROM

Gemma Lionello joins WWD Beauty Inc Summit

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Executive vice president and general merchandise manager of accessories and beauty, Gemma Lionello joined Allison Collins with WWD for their annual Beauty Inc Summit. During their discussion, Gemma emphasized the importance of evolving with our customers' needs, growing our inclusive beauty assortment and our commitments to sustainability. See highlights from their discussion below.

Nordstrom has always been innovative in the department store space, but the channel is changing rapidly. What do department stores need to remain relevant?

At Nordstrom, our number one goal has always been to give great service and help the customer feel good and look their best. Everything we do, we put through the filter of the customer—how the customer defines good service is constantly changing. So, we need to listen, look at data and engage with our customers to meet their needs.

We like to differentiate ourselves through several beauty-specific services—complimentary services with branded experts as well as our beauty stylists, beauty concierge and more. We must find ways to evolve how we engage with our customers, and we do this as a digital-first company. Being digital-first helps us adapt to the evolving needs of our customers. Using data we can push ourselves to make necessary changes—with assortment or services—which allows us to move with speed and agility to serve customers on their terms.

How do you keep up with changing consumers?

We are learning time and time again that customers don't shop through one channel—the way they shop depends on their needs at that moment in time and the experience they are looking for.

To help meet these various needs during the pandemic, we evolved our scaled events like our annual Beauty Trend Show and quickly pivoted to host our events through a digital platform. We partnered with beauty founders, creators and directors to launch our Livestream events which allow our customers to shop online with a beauty expert. We've had great success with our Livestream events with up to 1,000 customers engaging in the event and shopping. For us, it's not either-or when it comes to in-store and online events. We will continue with digital events and reintroduce in-store events like our Beauty Trend Show when it's safe to do so.

What has Nordstrom done or is planning to do to support diverse founders in beauty?

We understand the importance of being an inclusive company for our customers and employees alike. Nordstrom beauty specifically has long believed and thrived on being an inclusive category—we were the first retailer to launch MAC and continue to expand our product selection.

In late 2019, we committed to expanding our selection of inclusive beauty products by partnering with Black-founded brands. We also partnered with a Black-owned consulting agency that focuses on retail technology and experiential retail. We've worked together to build and strengthen authentic relationships with Black-founded brands in the industry while creating touchpoints to engage and listen to customers to build a more authentic, inclusive retail environment and customer experience.

What is your approach towards Sustainability in beauty?

Sustainability is important at Nordstrom and our beauty department—we focus on offering products that have sustainably sourced ingredients and packaging. In 2019, we launched our sustainable style category online. Customers can shop a range of sustainable products from fashion to beauty. As a retailer we have a responsibility to meet our customers' values—as we listen to our customers and employees we are constantly evolving. We also launched our BEAUTYCYCLE program. By partnering with Terra Cycle we are committed to recycling 100 tons of empty beauty products by 2025.

Do you have any predictions on makeup trends as we emerge from the pandemic?

Makeup will be back! We are already seeing our makeup categories improving as far as sales—specifically foundations. Eye shadows remain a strong product category, but we are calling the return to glamour. Customers are ready to have fun—attending events, weddings, celebrations and dinners and we are ready to meet their needs. We are seeing that demand of customers looking to use more makeup for various occasions and even at home. This past year it has been about sheer and easy makeup and now we are ready to glam it up.