MBS Intelligence

The Beauty Game Changers

Conversations with inspiring leaders from across the sector from The MBS Group and CEW

MBS CEW UNITED KINGDOM

Overview

Through conversations with leading Founders, Executives and Directors within the beauty sector, this publication explores the key pillars of game changing leadership and how these prominent voices will shape the industry, and inspire its future leaders.

Forewords

It is with great pleasure that CEW UK launches The Beauty Game Changers, in partnership with The MBS Group and leading voices across the industry.

As Managing Director of CEW UK, I am especially proud to spotlight the individuals who are driving transformative change within the beauty sector, championing the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion at every level of their organisations and communities.

The role models featured in this report are remarkable advocates for inclusion, paving the way for a beauty industry that truly reflects the diverse society we live in today. Their efforts go beyond surface-level representation; they are fostering a culture where everyone – regardless of race, gender identity, ability, or background – feels seen, heard, and empowered. Through their work, they are demonstrating that beauty is not defined by a single standard but by the celebration of individuality in all its forms.

This report has a dual purpose: first, to recognise and honour the individuals who are leading with purpose and driving positive change, and second, to serve as a source of inspiration for others in the industry. The stories of these role models make a compelling case for the power of inclusion. They challenge outdated norms and push back against biases, all while embedding equity into their everyday actions and business strategies.

Featuring a group of diverse and inspiring role models, this report showcases the unique journeys of those who are reshaping the beauty industry. These individuals are not only transforming their own organisations but also paving the way for future generations of rising stars and leaders of the future.

Their innovative, yet realistic, approaches to embedding EDI are truly inspiring – whether they are mentoring emerging talent, creating more inclusive product lines, or advocating for greater accessibility in beauty.

At CEW UK, we have long believed in the power of role models to inspire and enact positive change. I have had the immense privilege of connecting with several of the extraordinary individuals featured in this report. Their stories of resilience, courage, and dedication have deeply humbled and inspired me to continue championing diversity and inclusion in the beauty industry. On a personal level, I feel more committed than ever to breaking down barriers, challenging beauty standards, and building a future where every person can feel they belong and can thrive.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the role models featured in this year's report. Your contributions are not only shaping the future of beauty but also lighting the way for others to follow.

A special thank you to our partners at The MBS Group for their ongoing support and hard work in producing this invaluable resource.

Together, we are creating a more inclusive and representative beauty industry – one that celebrates the beauty of all.

SALLIE BERKEREY
Managing Director
CEW UK

Working in Executive Search gives us, at The MBS Group, the privilege of meeting inspiring leaders every day; it allows us to learn about their individual journeys and the depth and breadth of experience they bring to their roles. Inspired by this, and our research with CEW on the beauty industry, we wanted to shine a light on the role models who are leading innovatively and inclusively to inspire future leaders.

Sharing their personal experiences, each Founder, Executive and Director who contributed, has given us an insight into the journeys they have taken to become industry game changers, telling stories of growing a start-up without investment, or being on the senior leadership teams of some of the world's largest beauty businesses. The routes they have taken and the knowledge they have picked up along the way not only serves as inspiration to the next generation of industry leaders, but also impacts the way they are guiding the sector into the future.

Many of the leaders who shared their insights, thoughts and advice in this report, have worked in a number of roles across the globe, and many attribute their success to making decisions that were outside of their comfort zones, and consequentially, being exposed to learnings they may otherwise not have encountered. By absorbing these experiences, they are now able to put them into practice and shape an inclusive, industry that is led by diverse, flexible leaders.

This can then be an example to future leaders, as they are the people who will eventually take up the mantle and continue to grow and evolve the beauty sector. It was inspiring to hear how leaders are acting as role models for these future generations, encouraging them to keep pushing the boundaries and create a dynamic, enterprising space that is full of optimism and innovation. This optimism and anticipation for the future was reflected by the role models we spoke to, emphasising how much there is to look forward to, with many particularly highlighting technology, and its ability to be completely transformative in years to come.

The beauty industry is still growing, and with leaders like the ones featured in this publication who are setting examples for those looking to follow in their footsteps, it will only continue to progress in that direction.

We'd like to extend our special thanks to all the beauty leaders who took the time to share their stories, advice and expertise with us for this report, and for their commitment to continuing to inspire and better the sector; to CEW for your continued partnership, and to the team at MBS for their hard work in bringing this publication together.

HUW LLEWELLYN-WATERS
Partner, Consumer Goods Practice
The MBS Group

111SKIN
HARLEY ST. LONDON

EVA ALEXANDRIDIS
Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer
111SKIN

111SKIN was founded in 2007 by Eva Alexandridis and her husband Dr Yannis Alexandrides, world-renowned plastic and reconstructive surgeon. Eva is currently Chief Executive Officer, responsible for the day-to-day running of the company, the brand's evolution, and ensuring that the products encapsulate 111SKIN's mission: to create surgically-inspired skincare for total skin confidence.

Can you tell us a bit about your career so far and your journey to launching 111SKIN?

I was born in Bulgaria and had a very simple upbringing. In 1989, I was encouraged by my family to study in San Francisco instead of Moscow, which turned out to be a life-altering decision. Pursuing my master's degree in Electronic Commerce and International Business in the US was hugely formative, introducing me to new perspectives and entrepreneurial ideas.

Yannis and I met in Miami in 2005, and I later followed him to London where he had established his plastic and reconstructive clinic in 2001 – 111 Harley St.

> “Having a diverse mix of cultures and backgrounds within a team is crucial, as it introduces different perspectives and a unique spirit to the company.

Throughout his surgical career, Yannis experimented with numerous clinical-strength products, finding them too harsh and reactive for his patients' post-surgery, sensitive skin. As a result, Yannis's patients were using more sensorial skincare products from department stores. These products had no scientific backing nor contained ingredients that would yield visible healing results. Convinced that the ideal post-surgery skincare treatment was non-existent, he took my suggestion to design his own formula to speed up skin's healing.

Yannis initially developed a capsule collection of products for his clinic that were effective and innovative, while also being aesthetically pleasing and easy to incorporate into a daily routine. Prestigious department store, Harrods, caught wind of the client's demand for this product and reached out to launch it into a wider retail environment.

In 2012, named after Dr Yannis's clinic, 111SKIN was born and shelved in Harrods. Today, we are a global brand.

Thinking back, are there any key learnings or reflections you can share?

I've learnt a great deal and gained considerable confidence. At the beginning of my journey as a founder I struggled with imposter syndrome and often questioned the reasons behind my success. However, as time passed, I became more confident in finding my voice. Meeting numerous individuals – other founders and clients – has made me realize that 111SKIN deserves its recognition and leading position in the industry.

I've also faced many challenges that can sometimes feel never-ending. No doubt, entering the beauty industry is a long process which requires resilience.

Despite social media portraying the industry as glamourous and accessible for start-ups, this is not the reality. Prior to founding 111SKIN I had no experience in the beauty space which made the journey complex and daunting – I was embarking blindly without a foundation of industry knowledge. This lack of experience offered a fresh perspective, allowing us to carve our own path rather than following the typical beauty textbook.

Ultimately, all the challenges are worthwhile when you're creating something truly unique.

What is it like to work beside your husband?

Being a husband-and-wife team has been an incredibly positive experience for me. I believe that two founders are better than one, especially when each has distinct roles. As the CEO, I handle the day-to-day operations behind the business, while Yannis, with his expertise as a plastic surgeon, is the science behind the brand.

Yannis's ability to draw on his expertise is crucial to the product development and innovation of 111SKIN.

Why do you feel that it's so important for the beauty industry to be proactive about diversity and inclusion?

Having a mix of cultures and backgrounds within a team is crucial, as it introduces different perspectives and a unique spirit to the company. In the beauty industry in particular, a woman's perspective and intuition are invaluable. This is why I'm proud to say that 111SKIN's team is composed of 85% women and represents 38 nationalities.

What's your advice to the next generation of beauty leaders?

Be fearless, be ambitious, and above all – be confident in yourself. If you strongly believe in something, pursue it without second-guessing yourself.

I also recommend working under someone else to gain experience and learn before starting your own venture, even if you aspire to be your own boss.

Launching a business or project straight out of school or university can be exciting but challenging since you'll have to learn everything on your own. I recommend acquiring some basic business first skills, then being courageous enough to follow your ambitions.

BLINK BRŌW BAR

TAJ GILES
Managing Director
Blink Brow Bar

Taj Giles is Managing Director at Blink Brow Bar, a brow and lash services brand created as a solution to the lack of professional threading services in central London. It also makes cosmetics products. Prior to joining Blink Brow Bar in 2017, Taj spent almost two decades at Estée Lauder Companies, latterly as General Manager, Crème de la Mer UK & Ireland.

Can you tell us a bit about your career journey so far?

I studied French with International Relations at the University of St Andrews, and initially thought I wanted to work for an organisation like the United Nations. But by the time I'd graduated, I'd realised that an international career like that wasn't quite right for me. I looked at the different industries, and noticed that beauty seemed particularly resilient to economic headwinds.

I ended up joining the retail side of Estée Lauder back home in California to get started. I moved to London and worked my way up through marketing and sales roles, eventually becoming General Manager for La Mer in the UK after 12 years with the company.

After taking a career break, I joined the beauty brand Chantecaille for a few years. Then in an unexpected turn of events, Blink Brow Bar's founder, Vanita Parti, reached out to me about joining her company. We'd met before, but this time we just completely clicked. I've been at Blink for seven years now.

What was it like transitioning from a big corporate beauty company to a smaller, entrepreneur-led brand?

It was definitely an adjustment. At a big public company, you have centralised functions – like HR, Finance and Operations/Supply Chain – supporting the brand teams. At Blink, we're doing all of that ourselves, as a very lean team. There's much less bureaucracy in being able to make decisions, but also more responsibility in executing all aspects of the business. We are very agile and that is exciting and rewarding.

What are your key priorities as a business, and for you as a leader, at the moment?

One of our key objectives this year is applying for B Corp certification – and it's a journey I'm leading personally. The process has encouraged us to ask ourselves tough questions and has reinforced that we're a business which is naturally living out our values. When B Corp explored our hiring policy, they asked about diverse communities and underrepresented groups. We've always hired multicultural teams. Valuing skill sets and creating a diverse cohort of talent is naturally what we do, and within our management team, fifty percent of our leaders are from an ethnic minority group.

I'm also very passionate about our work with Future Dreams, a Breast Cancer Charity providing practical, emotional and psychological support, as well as funding vital research for those touched by breast cancer. Every month, we host brow workshops at the Future Dreams House in Kings Cross to offer useful advice and tutorials to support the community through all stages of hair loss due to chemotherapy. Feedback from the women we have met has also informed new product development in

the form of self adhesive stencils, which is essential when you have no visible brows. I was diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer in 2019, so this is an initiative that is really very close to my heart.

What does great leadership look like to you after your varied career experiences?

To me, great leadership is about actively listening to the diverse perspectives of your team, then synthesising that into a clear, motivating vision, before translating it into actionable plans. It can be a real challenge to ensure that you're listening to everyone in your team, especially within a hybrid working model that includes head office and shop-floor teams. How we bring everyone on the journey is key.

It's also – crucially – about empowering people. Our brand purpose is 'empowering women one thread at a time' and that applies to our team members as much as it does our customers. I think empowering people is one of the greatest gifts of leadership.

What excites you about working in the beauty space? What are you looking forward to seeing in the next few years?

Beauty is the ultimate inclusive industry, welcoming and celebrating people across all backgrounds. I think services like ours that offer personal, human experiences and connection will remain invaluable even as technology and AI advance in other areas.

There's something special about the in-person destination that can't be replicated virtually. So I'm excited to see the beauty industry continue to evolve, to inspire and deliver what people want: human experiences that make them feel empowered and good about themselves. I'm excited to be part of that future.

Can you share any learnings from your career?

One of my biggest learnings has been building confidence over time and not being hampered by self-doubt or imposter syndrome. Earlier in my career, I might have ruled myself out from taking on challenges I didn't feel fully qualified for based on my existing skillset and experiences.

But you have to give yourself a chance, be gentle with yourself, and be willing to adapt, grow and apply your strengths in new ways. I've taken on roles and responsibilities like product development, union negotiations and B Corp certification that I never could have envisioned early on. Having the curiousity to keep learning from each new experience has been important, too.

Dr Sam's

VICTORIA CAMPBELL
Managing Director
Dr Sam's Skincare

Victoria Campbell was appointed as Managing Director of Dr Sam's Skincare in February 2023, following more than 20 years in the beauty industry at L'Oreal and Unilever Prestige. Founded in 2018 by cosmetic dermatologist Dr Sam Bunting, who also founded the Dr Sam Bunting & Associates clinic at 41 Harley St, Dr Sam's products offer transformational formulations designed to exceed expectations of what skincare can deliver.

Did you always know you wanted to work within the beauty industry?

Absolutely – from a young age I fell in love with the Lancôme brand. I remember going to my local House of Fraser while I was at university, and getting my makeup done for a ball by the makeup artist. I loved the products, but as a student I couldn't afford to buy much, and at the end of the session she scraped off a bit of lipstick and put it in a pot for me to reapply throughout the night.

I had such a lovely experience that I became obsessed with the brand, and it was this that drove me to apply for L'Oreal at my university careers fair. Funnily enough, on day one of the graduate scheme, I bumped into the same lady who had applied my makeup in House of Fraser as she had just been promoted to a training role. It was such a lovely full-circle moment, and I still think about her today. It reminds me that retail is all about people.

Can you describe your career so far?

I spent the first 20 years of my career at L'Oreal, first on the grad scheme, before working my way up through the luxury space within the company. I moved to Australia, which ended up being a fantastic career move. It was a smaller market and I got so much exposure, becoming a General Manager at 29. When I left Australia, I was managing half of the luxury division.

I then joined Kiehl's within the group, which gave me the opportunity to learn about retail and ecommerce in greater depth. From there, I moved on to manage Lancôme, focusing on growing the fragrance business, before leading Armani Beauty. Craving something more entrepreneurial, I decided to join Unilever Prestige to manage the UK hub. This experience served as such a great stepping-stone to my current role at Dr Sam's. We're a small team, and I'm loving the agility that you have as a scale-up company.

> "The best leaders I've had inspired motivation and confidence in their teams, while being there to support them.

What have been some of your biggest leadership learnings over the course of your career?

I think great leadership is about creating psychological safety – making people feel like you'll

catch them if they fall and that it doesn't matter if they make mistakes. The best leaders I've had inspired motivation and confidence in their teams, while being there to support them. Someone summed it up well by saying you lead from the front when things aren't going well, and from the back when things are going well, allowing your team to get the credit.

Transparency and inclusion are also key; it's being open about the business, where it's going, and ensuring everyone feels part of that journey and can see the impact of their work.

Why do you think that diversity and inclusion is so important in the beauty industry specifically?

We live in a very multicultural society, and for too long, many didn't see themselves represented in beauty advertising and products. Beauty is personal, emotional and tied to outward appearance, so it's crucial that everyone feels included.

And the beauty industry has an important role to play in transforming society to be more inclusive, not just in visuals and advertising, but in the actual products being made to suit all skin tones and needs. Better data collection and analysis can help identify opportunities for improvement. There's still progress to be made in gender representation, especially in leadership roles historically occupied by men. But diversity also extends beyond gender and ethnicity to sexuality, age, abilities and having a diversity of thought across generations. As the population ages, we need to be inclusive of older demographics as well.

What excites you most about the beauty industry and your role at Dr Sam's?

Beauty is such a dynamic, innovative industry that has an emotional connection and impact on people's lives. Even in economic downturns, there's the "lipstick factor" that allows beauty to endure. After 24 years in an industry that I fell in love with as a student getting my makeup done by a wonderful Lancôme consultant, I can't see myself going anywhere else. What's most exciting about Dr Sam's is the ability to drive change in an entrepreneurial environment, unconstrained by the processes of a larger corporation. Being alongside an inspirational founder, Dr Sam Bunting, and having that direct connection and input into decisions is incredibly motivating.

ELEMIS
LONDON

BRIDGET MARSHALL
People Director
Elemis

Bridget Marshall has more than 25 years' cross industry experience, challenging businesses across all aspects of the HR strategy. She has been People Director at Elemis since September 2023, following a career that spanned roles at Twinings, Danisco, Genzyme and Porcshe.

Can you tell us about your career path and what led you to your current role in HR leadership?

Certainly. I didn't initially plan on a career in HR. After taking a gap year following my A-levels, I completed a higher national diploma in Business and Finance, which included a month's work placement at the Post Office HR department. And I just thought it was fascinating – I loved the variety and the opportunity to see different aspects of the business. Royal Mail offered me a job before I left, which kickstarted my HR career.

Since then, I've worked across various industries including the motor industry, pharmaceuticals, and now beauty. Each role has taught me something different and contributed to my growth as an HR leader. It's given me a huge amount of breadth, which has been incredibly valuable.

My experience has also taught me the importance of adult-to-adult conversations, pragmatism, and helping people understand what's happening, even if they don't always agree with it. I've incorporated coaching into my leadership style and focus on giving people vision, support, and challenge to help them grow and develop.

As an HR leader, what do you look for in great leadership from a CEO perspective?

I've learnt that one size doesn't fit all when it comes to leadership. Building relationships, trust, and being authentic are all crucial. A great CEO understands people's roles and provides direction, but also recognises they can't do it all. They should be willing to bring in functional experts and allow them to lead from the front in their areas of expertise.

I appreciate a CEO who can inspire the business and provide energy while clearly communicating the direction in which they're heading. It's also important for a CEO to be open to change and willing to let go of some control to allow others to contribute their expertise.

> “Building relationships, trust, and being authentic are all crucial. A great CEO understands people's roles and provides direction.

You've recently transitioned into the beauty industry. How does it compare to other sectors you've worked in?

One thing I love about the beauty industry is its embrace of change. There's a recognition that things are constantly evolving, whether it's in skincare, products, or the people agenda. There's a genuine desire to work together for the greater good, which creates a strong team atmosphere.

The industry does face unique challenges, particularly in terms of diversity. For example, we have the opposite gender diversity issue compared to many other industries – we're about 85% female. This presents interesting opportunities to think differently about diversity and inclusion.

Do you believe the beauty industry has a particular responsibility when it comes to diversity and inclusion?

Absolutely. The beauty industry influences people in many ways, often impacting their confidence and self-belief. We have a significant responsibility to consider diversity and inclusion in everything we do, from our products to our marketing and advertising. While I believe we're quite self-aware as an industry, there's always room for improvement and we need to continuously challenge ourselves in this area.

What excites you most about working in the beauty industry?

What really excites me is the positive impact we can have on people's lives. The beauty industry has the power to make people feel better about themselves and improve their wellbeing. In a world where mental health is such a crucial issue, if we can help boost someone's confidence or self-belief, even slightly, then that's incredibly rewarding.

I'm also proud to work for a B Corp certified company like Elemis, where sustainability and caring for the planet are key priorities. The combination of looking after people and the planet is something I'm passionate about and proud to be part of.

Any final words of advice for aspiring leaders?

I'd say don't be afraid to take career moves that prioritise your development and learning, rather than just chasing the next promotion. Every role brings challenges and opportunities for growth. Also, learn not to take things too personally – it's important to be passionate about your work, but also to step back and assess situations calmly. Finally, always be open to feedback. Reflect on your experiences and think about how you can apply those lessons going forward. That's how you'll accelerate your growth as a leader.

elida BEAUTY

JEAN-LAURENT INGLES
Former Chief Executive Officer
Elida Beauty

Jean-Laurent Ingles has been part of the Unilever group for more than 30 years, working across multiple functions and specialist areas. In January 2021, Jean-Laurent was appointed as CEO at Elida Beauty, which comprises of more than 20 beauty and personal care brands including Q-Tips, Caress, Timotei and Tigi. In June 2024, Elida Beauty was sold to Yellow Wood Partners LLC, a private equity firm based in Boston, USA. At sale completion, Jean-Laurent stepped down as CEO and took up the role of Non-Executive Director for Elida Beauty in the newly formed Board of Directors together with Yellow Wood members.

Looking back on your career, what have been some of your biggest learnings?

A huge learning for me has been to not be afraid to take steps into the unknown. There are two examples that spring to mind. One pivotal decision in my career was moving to the UK from France, which appeared at the time like a cultural risk. My wife and I had two young babies at the time, but we were guided by a sense of adventure. The job was a European role running fabric conditioner brands, and it required a lot of reflection at work due to the cultural differences and unwritten social rules in the UK.

Another significant step was when we decided to go to Vietnam 10 years later. It was both a change of region and a change of role, as I took on a General Manager position in a country I didn't know. I had to fight for the job, but it was a huge personal and business stretch with a large cultural dimension. I was one of only two foreigners in a company of more than 1,000 people.

But in both those instances, I'm so glad I took the leap – my advice to others would be to always follow the adventure and the challenge!

> "Beauty brands now have the opportunity to get much deeper under the skin of who people really are. It's a very exciting time.

Did you always know that you wanted to land in a general management or CEO-type role? How did you find the transition?

My profile had been very marketing-oriented for a long time, and that hasn't changed. Even as a General Manager, my approaches were still very consumer and market-driven. However, the big change when I moved to Vietnam was carrying the weight of a company, being the face of it, and realising how lonely these roles can be. CEO leadership roles are incredibly rewarding and demanding, but they are lonely.

How do you think your diverse career has shaped your approach to leadership?

My career has proven that you almost always end up not being the smartest or most knowledgeable person in the room. So in Vietnam it was very obvious: I didn't speak Vietnamese, I didn't know the distributors, I was learning about the consumers. I had to have a large amount of humility in terms of asking the right questions, but making sure you are surrounded with people who could take you on the journey to succeed.

And moreover, often being in your discomfort zone makes you realise where you really can add value. You learn that you need to surround yourself with great people, and a lot of your role as a leader is to make sure that people perform at their best. There's a strong link to diversity here, around ensuring that everyone contributes and every voice is heard.

What kind of leadership challenge did you face when carving out Elida Beauty from the rest of the Unilever group?

It was super exciting and played to my passions for creativity, building things, and innovating. I spent a disproportionate amount of time working on the vision and values of the company, almost like a piece of marketing work. I also realised how many different cogs needed to turn, the technicality and the detail required - lots of which you take for granted in a large company. Patience was key, as it takes time for things to mature and fall into place.

From a diversity and inclusion perspective, what do you think beauty's role is in progressing that conversation?

Over the last two decades, beauty has evolved from celebrating an ideal to celebrating who you are, wherever you are. This translates into race, gender, gender fluidity, your body, your background. Beauty brands now have the opportunity to get much deeper under the skin of who people really are. It's a very exciting time.

What keeps you excited about the beauty industry today?

I love the fact that you need to stay on top of trends, and have a natural curiosity about aesthetics in the beauty industry. You need that openness and that passion to succeed. And I'm drawn to beauty's impact in shaping culture. It can be such a powerful force for good for the right type of values, and for positive mental health and wellbeing. There's also a real duty to be a force for good at the individual level and in terms of sustainability and environmental impact. It's these things that keep me genuinely excited about the future of the beauty sector.

ESTĒE LAUDER COMPANIES

MONICA RASTOGI
Regional Director, Inclusion, Diversity & Equity and Cultural Relevancy
The Estée Lauder Companies UK & Ireland

Monica Rastogi has been at The Estée Lauder Companies for over 15 years, working across a number of brands and functions both globally and locally. Today, Monica is responsible for leading the company's internal and external approach to beauty inclusion through both the employee and consumer lens.

What has your career journey looked like so far?

Entering the beauty industry was a major career leap for me. I was pre-med when I graduated from university, but my father wisely advised me to try something different for a year while still being able to support myself financially. That's when I entered the world of marketing, working for companies like Bloomingdale's and Club Monaco, and I became enamored by how much influence you can have across the many different touchpoints of a consumer's journey.

One of the biggest lessons I've taken from my career is that a traditional linear path is quite an old-school mentality. Nowadays, there's immense value in being on a continuous learning journey and focusing on building skills rather than just chasing titles. I was a traditional marketer through and through for so many years, so when I took on the newly-created role of Culture and Local Relevancy Director at The Estée Lauder Companies it was a hugely exciting step. It was a pioneering position, which came without a defined job spec.

What attracted you to take on that pioneering role?

When I started in a global marketing role at The Estée Lauder Companies, I was fascinated by the nuances I observed in something as simple as women's lashes across different cultures and regions. It made me realise that while beauty is a universal desire, how it's defined and experienced is deeply rooted in your culture and background. That sparked my interest in celebrating people's unique beauty perspectives. So when the Cultural Relevancy role came up, allowing me to tap into those unique viewpoints across brands and functions, it was the perfect opportunity to explore that curiosity further.

What does great leadership look like to you?

At its core, leadership is a people-centric role. Leading with empathy, which was traditionally viewed as a soft skill, is vital. You need to connect with and inspire your team while fostering a strong sense of collaboration. Everyone wants to feel seen and heard, so empowering your teams to lead from wherever they sit is key.

At The Estée Lauder Companies, we're working on building inclusive leadership capabilities and have initiatives like the 'Big Breakthrough Challenge' that empower employees to present bold ideas to leadership. It's about understanding what matters to your multi-generational workforce and leading with the empathy to appreciate their diverse perspectives. Fostering that community and ensuring people feel their ideas are truly heard and considered is crucial for retaining top talent.

Why, in your view, is diversity and inclusion so integral to the beauty industry?

Beauty isn't about one-size-fits-all – it's a highly personal experience shaped by one's identity, culture, and life stage. As brands, we have a responsibility to be able to satisfy the beauty needs and goals of all consumers who interact with us. The way I experience aging as a South Asian

> As a people-first company, diversity, equity and inclusion have always been part of our fabric, and we approach DEI as a collective and evolving practice. We never stop listening and learning from our employees, consumers and communities to build an authentic connection and keep our initiatives relevant and impactful. We consider all facets of diversity, in every aspect of our business; from hiring and developing diverse talent to making our services more accessible, and having a product offering representing the diversity of our consumers and their unique definition of beauty.
>
> **Sue Fox, President,**
> **The Estée Lauder Companies UK & Ireland**

woman through hyperpigmentation, for instance, is different from a Caucasian woman who may see more lines and wrinkles.

To authentically connect with today's consumer, diversity and inclusion can't be a bolt-on, it has to be embedded across everything you do. We're celebrating 20 years of D&I being a key priority. Today's customers are voting with their wallets and employees are ensuring that their value system aligns with those of their workplace. So we have to demonstrate tangible, impactful action in this space. It's an ongoing journey of listening, iterating, and collectively striving to better serve the needs of our dynamic consumers and employees.

What excites you most about the future of this industry?

I'm really excited to see the ethos of purpose fully come to life in meaningful ways. There's also the role of inclusive technology in helping us build connections with consumer segments like the disabled and neurodiverse communities who have been traditionally underserved. For instance, our new Voice-Enabled Makeup Assistant app, available on iPhones and Androids, empowers blind and low-vision consumers to apply makeup with confidence while also benefiting others like the elderly population. And recently one of our brands, M·A·C Cosmetics partnered with leading language service provider, Sorenson Communications, to launch a British Sign Language (BSL) virtual makeup service, giving consumers from the deaf and hearing loss community the option to pre-book a free, 45-minute, one-to-one virtual session with a M·A·C Artist, joined by a BSL Interpreter, for a personalised tutorial.

Leveraging technology for inclusive design unlocks the ability to better serve existing consumers while fostering brand love with new segments. It's not just about the products, but also thinking about experiences and services that can be elevated through innovative solutions. The potential to incorporate purposeful, inclusive tech across our business in ways that truly move our industry forward is incredibly energising.

LIZ GRIFFITHS
Managing Director UK & Ireland
ghd

Liz Griffiths's career in the beauty industry has spanned more than 25 years, working for the likes of P&G and L'Oréal in London and Paris, in senior management positions. Most recently, Liz joined ghd in 2022 as Managing Director UK & Ireland, to head up the leading haircare brand. With a team of majority women, she is passionate about developing women in leadership.

Can you tell us about your career journey and how you got to where you are today?

I started my career with an internship at P&G where, as a late teen, I was wowed by the big budgets, the exciting TV campaigns, and the big-name brands. After a few years, I took the opportunity to join a small haircare company called Trevor Sorbie, which was a stark contrast with founders at the head of the business. It gave me a fantastic insight into the world of professional haircare and hairdressing, whilst giving me a different perspective on the value of every pound invested.

> "Attracting and retaining a balanced and diverse workforce in all our teams, I believe, is a common goal in the industry, in order to connect with our consumers, employees, customers, suppliers and community.

About five years into my professional career, I landed at L'Oréal and found my home. Hard work paid off and I had some fantastic growth opportunities in my 13 years tenure, taking on 11 different roles across various brands, functions, and projects. L'Oréal is the ultimate school of marketing, and I was constantly motivated to learn. I moved to Paris to lead the American brands for EMEA just before the pandemic, which gave me such new perspective on different markets and business models. When I returned to the UK, I was offered the opportunity to lead the ghd brand for the UK&I business – the number one market, which comes with an exciting growth journey and an incredible team, that I'm extremely proud of.

What has your experience taught you about leadership, now that you're in an MD role yourself?

I believe that a great leader is someone who sees things others potentially don't see, someone who then sets a clear vision and path for the future and brings their team along on that journey. You must have eyes on the future, but then be able to come back into the present to effectively communicate your vision so everyone knows what they're striving for.

Repetition is key – if you've got a firm vision, you need to repeat it like a drumbeat so that every person at every level of the organisation understands their role in getting us there. It's also crucial to have diversity in a leadership team, so that not everyone is saying the same thing. Healthy debate with core facts behind beliefs is essential.

What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders in your team?

Firstly, I would tell them that it's a marathon, not a sprint. Everyone wants to race and be the first to get a better title, but experience and wisdom are important credentials to stand you in good stead for when you get there. A squiggly career, where you move between different functions and roles, can be incredibly valuable. For example, my sideways move from marketing to commercial early on in my career was the best thing I ever did, and gave me a rounder and deeper understanding of how an organisation can succeed.

Secondly, I would advise them to build authentic leadership by speaking up when they have something to say and being bold and proud of their core values.

Finally, I would emphasise the importance of gravitas. When you get to a leadership position, you want people to look up to you and believe that you belong there, which comes from experience, great sponsors and stakeholders and the art of communication.

Why do you feel diversity and inclusion are so important for the beauty industry, and where do you think challenges lie moving forward?

Attracting and retaining a balanced and diverse workforce in all our teams, I believe, is a common goal in the industry, in order to connect with our consumers, employees, customers, suppliers and community. One challenge I see is that women are exiting out of high profile companies at certain ages, at levels below the executive leadership, which therefore limits the pipeline for future CEOs. We need to ensure there's good enough representation in the first place, as well as support at those pivotal life moments, to ensure women are amongst the fair selection to be nominated for those top roles. I will always be a cheerleader for this.

What excites you most about the future of the beauty industry, and what keeps you engaged in this space?

Beauty is simply the best vertical, and we have a large growth trajectory. Different categories may have their moments, but I don't think beauty will ever slow down. The market is exciting and competitive, with new brands constantly challenging. Innovation is key. It's also a very personal industry – everyone has a story related to skincare or haircare that they want to talk about or unlock. It's that emotional connection that keeps me engaged and excited about beauty.

joshwood

JOSH WOOD
Founder and Creative Director
Josh Wood Colour

Josh Wood has been a prominent figure in the haircare industry for more than 30 years, beginning as a hair colourist and progressing to Global Colour Visionary with Wella. In 2018, Josh created Josh Wood Colour, his own brand of at-home colour products. He currently has a residency at Claridge's and a flagship atelier in Holland Park.

You've had a remarkable 30-year career in the hairdressing industry. How did you get started and what drew you to this field?

I really fell into hairdressing; I didn't choose it, it chose me. I started working on Saturdays as a junior in a salon in Barnsley, Yorkshire, sweeping up hair. I quickly realised it was a good fit for me, both creatively and personally, and that I could turn it into a real career. After completing a youth training scheme, I went to Vidal Sassoon in Leeds to get qualified. As soon as I finished, I moved to London and had a very happy 12-year career at Vidal Sassoon, including working in New York with David Bowie.

After my time in New York, I realised there was an opportunity in London for a cooler, more editorial salon environment compared to the traditional "Madame going to get her hair done" vibe. So, in 1999, I opened my first salon in Chelsea which was very successful. I ran that for 10 years before selling it and launching my current business, starting with the atelier in Notting Hill 12 years ago. That laid the foundation for launching the Josh Wood Colour brand five years ago, which has grown rapidly.

Looking back, what have been your biggest learnings as a business owner?

It's a cliché, but it's true: it's all about the people. Understanding who gets my vision and can support me in achieving our goals without me feeling constrained. The biggest challenges have centered around trust and clear communication. I've learnt not to get overly emotionally invested, even though that's hard as a creative person. Building the right team and being able to navigate when things don't go to plan has been key.

And everything I do is, in a way, unconventional, since I don't have a formal business education. I've built the brand around the customer rather than the other way around. Hiring great people and really listening to and learning from them has enabled me to do things differently in a way that resonates.

> "I try to foster a very open environment where people feel their contribution matters, regardless of their role or background.

What does great leadership mean to you?

Creating an environment where people can thrive, but with the direction and support they need. You have to be able to lead, grow, nurture and be there for your team. Agreeing a clear strategy and then empowering people to deliver against that. Giving them space to contribute and feel part of the success. But also being willing to part ways if someone doesn't want to be on the journey.

Why do you feel diversity and inclusion is so integral to the beauty industry? How do you role model inclusive leadership?

It's vital that people can look at our industry and see themselves represented in it. That's how young people gain confidence that they'll be included. A D&I policy alone isn't enough – it has to be an active, thriving part of the culture. We do fairly well in hair, with a largely female and LGBTQ+ workforce, but we have more work to do on ethnic diversity.

I try to foster a very open environment where people feel their contribution matters, regardless of their role or background. When someone feels marginalised, being part of the bigger picture is revelatory. Making leadership very accessible changes D&I from a set of rules into a living ethos.

What excites you about the future of the beauty industry? What challenges do you see?

We're at a real crossroads. There are innovative new brands shaking things up while legacy companies try to reinvent themselves. A big challenge is attracting young talent, especially in hair services. The intake of new hairdressers has fallen over 60%. We need to make the career path feel more appealing and entrepreneurial. More incubator programs and VC funds open to small beauty investments could really help.

How have role models influenced you?

They've been incredibly important, but often in unconventional ways. Early on, I had supporters who gave me confidence despite my challenging background. Later, I sought out mentors doing things differently, sometimes outside the beauty industry. I've been inspired by those who define success beyond just financial outcomes, in terms of the positive impact on people.

If you weren't a hairdresser, what would you be doing?

As a kid I dreamed of being an architect, but didn't have the discipline for the schooling required. More recently I've realised I love the conviviality of hospitality. I could picture myself as a barman, setting up a great bar and letting other people have the fun while I head to bed early! I think there are some interesting parallels between hairdressing and hospitality.

L'OCCITANE
EN PROVENCE

DIANNA TIEU
Managing Director, UK & Ireland
L'Occitane

Dianna Tieu is the Managing Director of L'Occitane UK & Ireland and has previously held General Manager roles at La Mer, Darphin UK & Ireland and Natura Bissé in Asia. Her background is marketing and she has led marketing for Harrods Beauty, Estée Lauder and Jo Malone London Asia Pacific. She is proud to be British-born Chinese and Vietnamese and a mother of two young children. She is a CEW Board Member, a member of the British Beauty Council DE&I Committee and an Advisory Board Member of 100 Allies.

You've had a 20-year career in the beauty industry. How did it all start for you?

I stumbled into beauty during my penultimate year at university. I was interested in advertising and after applying for over 30 internships, got a placement as a runner at an ad agency where I was placed on the Rimmel account. I have always loved Beauty as a consumer and that's when I realised people actually work in beauty as a career, and I knew it was for me. From there, I applied for more internships and landed my first roles in beauty - first as a Marketing Intern and then as Personal Assistant to the General Manager who was so incredibly generous with sharing her knowledge and answering my constant curious questions.

I've been very fortunate to have many wonderful mentors and champions who supported my learning and I'm so grateful for the support I've received along my journey.

And looking back on your career, what do you think makes a great leader?

Authentic leadership is critical. The most inspiring leaders I've worked for all had different styles, but it was always authentic to who they were. Early on, you might try to emulate leaders you admire and over time you find your own style by taking what resonates with you and adding your own stamp. It's not always easy, but it's so important for credibility and feeling comfortable and content within yourself.

> "Our industry has a huge responsibility in using its influence to ensure that what is considered "beautiful" is authentically representative of our consumers and culture.

What career advice would you give to the next generation of beauty leaders?

First, enjoy what you do and believe in it. We're so fortunate in our industry that most of us are here out of real passion. At L'Occitane our passion is to have a positive impact on people and nature. This shows up in our B Corp certification, the traceability of our iconic ingredients and respecting biodiversity. For our people, it shows up in our commitment to be an accredited Living Wage employer and our initiatives to empower our teams such as support during parental and grandparent leave, menopause, pregnancy loss, fertility treatment, work from anywhere policies and flexible bank holidays.

Second, see your career as a jungle gym, not a ladder. Often, most growth comes from lateral or even downward moves that broaden your

experience. I took a couple of apparent steps back in my career to gain experience, like experiencing new markets or different size businesses. For me, learning and broadening your horizons is more rewarding than a title.

You've worked across different countries and cultures. How has that shaped you as a leader?

Moving to Asia was a proactive choice to learn and put myself in a different environment. It was humbling and eye-opening. I had to unlearn ways that worked in the UK and really understand how to bring out the best in a different cultural context. Not assuming I had the answers and learning to adapt my approach, especially when it came to teams, was a huge lesson and one I cherish.

Why do you feel diversity and inclusion is so important in the beauty industry specifically?

Our industry has a huge responsibility in using its influence to ensure that what is considered "beautiful" is authentically representative of our consumers and culture. It's not just about delivering products that work – the beauty industry plays a part in notions of beauty in society. As a mother of a young girl, I want my daughter to see herself reflected in the images and messages she's surrounded with. Beauty is so connected with culture, and as culture evolves, we have a duty to evolve with it in a representative way.

Where do you see the biggest challenges in continuing to make progress on D&I?

There's been good improvement in consumer-facing campaigns in recent years. But I believe we still have a way to go in diversity – both visible and invisible – around the tables where decisions get made. Even at my level, I still often find myself as the only person of colour in the room. We can't be complacent; we all hold influence to use our voices, and table uncomfortable questions to collectively progress on systemic change.

It's such a joy to be in my position in the beauty industry, but I also take it as an immense responsibility. How can we collectively lift the next generation of leaders? And the more I reflect on it, the more I think humanising DEI plays a huge role. Afterall, it boils down to a feeling of belonging. We've got to provide a platform for the voices and the stories of underrepresented groups in our industry, to normalise DEI. I'm proudly the daughter of immigrants and refugees, my parents fled the Vietnam War and with a lot of humbleness and grit started from scratch in the UK which in turn, not only shaped who I am but allowed me opportunities. I'm not the classic leadership profile in the industry and maybe by sharing my story it can connect and resonate with others.

What keeps you excited to continue in this industry?

Our industry is so intrinsically linked to culture and consumers, it means that you never stand still. What works today may not work in two years. I find that constant change fascinating, the substance of your work is always changing. Trends, consumer needs, cultural shifts; they all change and that means that your job is always evolving. I love that.

L'ORÉAL GROUPE

MANASHI GUHA
Chief Growth Officer
L'Oréal, UK & Ireland

A self-confessed beauty democratiser, wo(mentor) and transformer, Manashi Guha has spent 25 years in different sectors that include strategy consulting, food and the beauty sector. A L'Oréal Groupe veteran, Manashi is currently based in London as Chief Growth Officer for L'Oréal UK & Ireland. Prior to her current role, she was Managing Director for the Consumer Products Division (CPD) UK & Ireland, leading a brand portfolio that includes L'Oréal Paris, Maybelline and Garnier. Manashi joined the UK & Ireland leadership team from the South Asia Pacific Middle East North Africa (SAPMENA) Zone Management Committee, where she had served since the founding of this strategic growth region in 2021.

How did your career in beauty begin?

My roots are from a small town in the south of India called Tiruchirapalli, in Tamil Nadu. My family comes from Bengal, so I was always exposed to different Indian cultures right from the start. I joined L'Oréal in India in 2008 and immediately felt a connection to the beauty métier and the entrepreneurial DNA of the company. It's been a holistic experience for me – 16 years in the company, nine cross-functional roles across countries and continents. There has never been a dull moment, with great cultural learning experiences and lots of interesting personal stories. Beauty is my home.

What does it take to be a leader today?

My leadership 'must haves' are listening, authenticity and agility. Listen to your intuition all the time and listen to both what people tell you and what they don't. Having worked across a multitude of cultures, I'm deeply attuned to listening to what's unsaid, leaning-in and tweaking my personal style while staying true to myself. I call our generation of leaders the "lean-in generation" because we are dealing with two generations simultaneously. We have one which has been in leadership, and another which is Millennials and Gen Z. It's a fantastic space to be in because you're absorbing the best of both. As a leader, I am as humble adapting to people as I am to technology!

What have been some of the challenges you've had to navigate throughout your career?

While growing up, I always imagined myself as a world citizen, studying, working and living in different countries. However, it is difficult with twin careers in the family across geographies. When women decide to do this, a lot of labels are thrown around. Adjusting to a split family requires a lot more resilience for everyone involved, but what thrills me is that my child and my mum are as proud of what I do as I am.

How much has mentorship played a role in your career?

From an early age, I found mentors in literature or politics, like Indira Gandhi and Sirimavo Bandaranayke, who were some of the first women Prime Ministers in Asia. As an adult, I've been inspired by Maya Angelou and Indra Nooyi. In L'Oréal, mentorship is important and spoken about publicly. The culture, always, is to have conversations and make connections. We want people to mingle. The more people you know, the more you build

your own thoughts. Sometimes, mentors are senior, but peers and reverse mentors make a great combination. I have a good mix of both within the company and outside.

> My leadership 'must haves' are listening, authenticity and agility

What is your perspective on diversity and inclusion within the beauty space?

'Beauty is for All' is a universal truth. But the flip side, is that over centuries, we have iconised beauty symbols: physical features, skin tones - where too pale or too dark is not good enough - or physical size. These standards were created for women, not by women – it' s almost as if you defined your worth through someone else's eyes. That's exactly why diversity, equity and inclusion are important in beauty as it needs to recognise and express beauty for all.

How do you walk the talk on diversity and how do you do it at scale?

Technology is enabling a shift in customisation which is exciting both in terms of product and education. It should help us to democratise beauty for all. As a world beauty leader, we take the understanding of all beauty types and unmet needs seriously.

What advice would you give the next generation of beauty leaders?

I would tell them to go and experience the world as early as they can to build perspective. There's a move towards skills and learning and I have focused on roles that have given me opportunities to either learn a skill, understand a new function, or embrace a new culture. Most people want vertical careers, but the future is matrix – it's about how you use your accumulated experiences to lead or add value to a situation.

And finally, as you look ahead to your career, what excites you about the future of the beauty industry?

The impact that innovation can make in customisation, providing advice and encouraging confidence and worth through technology. This feeds into a huge opportunity to create a 'Beauty for All' culture, which is an inclusive beauty opportunity that spans across generations and ethnicities which I refer to as a 'Multiverse'. I'm also excited about our responsibility towards sustainable beauty because the way we perceive beauty could completely change with a sustainability mindset. I've recently completed an eight-week Business Sustainability course with the University of Cambridge, and it showed me that there is so much to do, and that beauty leaders, like us, can move the needle much faster and at scale.

(MALIN+GOETZ)
new york.
DESIGNED. FOR ALL THE WAYS WE LIVE.

BRAD HOROWITZ
Chief Executive Officer
MALIN+GOETZ

Brad Horowitz joined MALIN+GOETZ as Chief Executive in 2018. MALIN+GOETZ is a genderless lifestyle brand with a five-category product portfolio, spanning face, body, hair, candles and fragrances. Brad has spent more than 30 years in the beauty industry, including 10 years at Clarins and five years as President at South Korean beauty company AMOREPACIFIC.

Let's start at the beginning - how did you first land in the beauty industry?

It was really for love. My wife was from Philadelphia, and after college I knew I needed to find a job there. I wish I could say it was more calculated than that! I ended up getting a sales job at Clarins, working my way up from the Philadelphia market through a series of promotions until I became the lead sales role in New York City.

Though I was in sales, I was really interested in marketing. I got my master's degree part-time and after about eight years, I asked to transition into Clarins' marketing department. I took a step back at first, but then advanced through marketing roles over the next seven years until I became SVP of Marketing.

How did your leadership role unfold from there?

I left for an SVP sales role at L'Oréal's designer fragrance division before the 2008 recession hit. I then started my own consulting business which was great timing – companies needed the work but weren't hiring full-time employees. With 18 years of experience, I could take on major workloads for brands like Oscar de la Renta and Bond No. 9.

Then I was recruited by AMOREPACIFIC, a huge Korean corporation with little western presence at the time. The opportunity was taking their innovative billion-dollar Asian brands and westernising them for markets like the US. We grew that business dramatically over six years.

After that, I wanted to work somewhere I could have equity. MALIN+GOETZ gave me that, and we've grown the brand significantly in my six years here too. I've really landed on loving to scale up brands.

You've had an incredibly broad career. How purposeful was accumulating all of those different experiences?

Very purposeful. I always advise people to be strategic about handling their career, even when taking calculated risks. I use the analogy of building blocks: every move should be additive in some way, whether gaining new skills, experiences or perspectives. Sometimes it's cultural too, like going from a French company to an Asian one.

> People work for the company and their boss first, before the brand itself. So, fostering an environment they want to be part of is critical for retention and satisfaction.

How have all those experiences shaped your leadership style?

The best part of running a company is establishing the culture. Obviously, the brand itself has its own identity, but as the leader, it's up to you to set the corporate ethos and how you want to lead people.

In my roles, I've built cultures around the same principles of empathy, humanity, and a productive sense of "fight" – pushing for achievement in a supportive environment. People work for the company and their boss first, before the brand itself. So, fostering an environment they want to be part of is critical for retention and satisfaction.

Looking back, what have been some of your biggest leadership learnings?

I've learnt that people want to feel empowered to truly make a difference and see the impact of their work, no matter their level. It's demotivating when they feel confined to a box.

Especially in a creative industry like beauty, you need to give people psychological safety to try new things without fearing failure. An attitude of "test and learn" fosters an innovative culture. My role is putting people in a position to affect change.

What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders, especially in beauty?

Hard work trumps all. We're not doing brain surgery here – effort and being indispensable goes such a long way. I really push people to keep learning through conferences, through reading, through self-development. You can't become static in such a fast-changing industry.

I also learn a lot from employees, especially younger ones who grew up in the digital era. I make sure to really listen to them instead of just dictating. You have to stay curious and humble enough to absorb knowledge from all levels.

Why do you feel diversity and inclusion is so important for the beauty industry in particular?

First, I have to credit our founders Matthew Malin and Andrew Goetz, who are partners in life as well as in business. Their relationship and presence has built-in inclusion to our company's DNA from the start.

More broadly, as a beauty company, we need to be for everyone. Skin is skin: we make gender-neutral products to care for all people's skin, hair and bodies. I think that the beauty industry at large should be innovating with that universal lens.

Finally, what has kept you in this dynamic industry for so long?

It's an industry that never stays static, it's always evolving through innovation. There's still room for newcomers and disruptors to shake things up with a great new product concept. That constant opportunity for reinvention keeps things exciting.

Orveon

NEELA MONTGOMERY
Chief Executive Officer
Orveon Global

Neela Montgomery was appointed CEO at Orveon Global in January 2024, after a 20 year career in the consumer and retail sectors which comprised of leadership roles at Tesco, Crate & Barrel and CVS Health. Orveon Global owns a portfolio of premium brands including Bare Minerals, Laura Mercier and Buxom.

You've had an incredible career spanning different industries and countries. Can you take us through some of your biggest learnings?

I was privileged to spend my early career at Tesco, which is a business that understands how to develop talent. They provided me with diverse experiences across strategy, supply chain and merchandising, which gave me an incredible foundation for being a CEO.

I also gained a global perspective early on, from doing my MBA in France and Singapore, to working in Malaysia, Germany and the US. The global piece was definitely intentional - I'm fascinated by other cultures and wanted that cultural immersion. It helped me understand that while there are global consumer trends, local customers have different needs and priorities.

It was always my goal to become a CEO. As my career developed, I initially thought my path would lead to a large company. But after Tesco, I worked in privately-held German companies and saw a different, more entrepreneurial, founder-driven model. I really enjoyed that entrepreneurial world, which became another theme of my career – taking on former founder-led businesses, or being in industries with an interesting mix of founder and brand identity.

How do you think the breadth and variety of your career has impacted your leadership style?

It has certainly built some resilience and some perspective. Not a lot surprises you, and you understand there are multiple ways to solve issues. A big learning for me was figuring out how to manage creative talent and ensure the brand stays alive and relevant, which is more art than science. Respecting that and enabling creative talent to thrive under your leadership is key.

What does great leadership look like to you?

There's an important moment as a leader when you realise it's much less about what you need, and more about what your team needs from you. Your job is to bring out greatness in your teams, because you can't be everywhere and do everything. Leadership is about creating a culture where people thrive and achieve their potential.

I sometimes describe it like this: you can go to the market and buy great, fresh, ingredients but still cook a terrible dish. As a leader, you can recruit the talent, but then you have to ensure they're in an environment where they can perform their best.

Turning to diversity and inclusion, why do you think this is so important?

Most obviously, because 80% of purchasing decisions are made by women. I've always worked in industries where this is the case, and so it makes clear business sense for the leadership to reflect the customer base. You simply get better answers, and make better decisions.

For example, I sit on Logitech board, which is 40% women and represents eight nationalities. It may take us longer to reach decisions – because

each person is bringing unique thinking and perspectives, you have to be prepared to compromise some efficiency for a better solution – but the end result is much stronger.

In beauty specifically, the industry has historically been driven by luxury which is very undiverse, so for years there's been a disconnect between those making the decisions, building the brands, and creating the aspirational image of beauty, and those actually buying the products. It's been fantastic to see this change in the last few years, though, most notably in the UK and US. Authenticity is now in demand.

What advice would you give to the next generation of beauty leaders?

Early in your career, get breadth and variety of experiences. Your career likely won't be as linear as you expect. Look at everything through the lens of what you'll learn and how it will add to your experience.

Think as globally as you can because beauty is a global industry. Think about your role in culture because beauty really intersects with culture. To be great in beauty, you must invest in exploring global popular culture.

Create champions along the way, whether mentors, peers or industry contacts. While a massive industry, it can be a small community, and you'll be surprised how often you cross paths with people again.

And, finally, if your aspiration is to be CEO, take the time to understand different ownership models – venture-backed, private equity, public – and what matters to the shareholders. Often people think if they just do a great job, they will be recognised. That's true, but you need to understand where power sits, how decisions are made and how shareholder value is created – and which model resonates most with you.

As a beauty CEO, do you feel a different sense of responsibility given beauty's intersection with culture?

Absolutely. We need to ensure we are teaching young women who enter this category to be proud and confident in their bodies and appearances. That's an important responsibility that shows up very differently in beauty compared to other industries and we take that very seriously.

What excites you most about the future of the beauty industry?

So many things: the rise of women's sports and how that fits into beauty; women being in stronger leadership positions; biotech advancements with more science-backed ingredients; the influence of the global consumer, especially skincare trends driven by Korea. In such a fast-moving industry, I know it's going to be an exciting few years ahead.

SANDRA VALLOW
Director of Merchandising, Beauty
QVC UK

Sandra Vallow has spent 14 years at QVC UK, the video commerce retailer, and has been Director of Merchandising, Beauty since April 2020. Prior to QVC, Sandra spent seven years at Fenwick, latterly as a Beauty Buyer.

Could you give us an overview of your career journey so far?

I started my career as a graduate trainee at Fenwick Limited, working my way through various departments before being promoted to a Buyer in Ladieswear. That's where my introduction to beauty began. One day, the MD asked if I'd like to take over Beauty. It had never been something I'd thought about, but I went for it. At 25, I found myself running the fourth-largest beauty hall in the country. It was a massive learning curve, but I absolutely loved it.

In 2009, I made a move to QVC as a Cosmetics Buyer. By October, I was promoted to Senior Buyer, and eventually worked my way up to my current position as Director of Merchandising, leading the beauty category.

When you landed at QVC in 2009, what was the mission when it came to beauty?

Coming from a traditional bricks and mortar retailer, QVC had a different reputation. My ambition was to use my industry influence and relationships to develop QVC's premium beauty portfolio and really get QVC on the map for beauty. We've established a strong mix of high street brands, brands we've launched in the UK, and niche brands that give us a point of difference.

The broadcast piece is exciting too – instead of pounds per square foot, it's pounds per minute, and your shop floor is your TV channel or a live social stream. It's a slightly different way of thinking, but that's where you grow most as a leader, when you take on exciting opportunities.

It also gives us a different relationship with the customer. At QVC, we can't walk onto the shop floor and say hi, so we work doubly hard to build that relationship. It's integral to everything we do.

Looking back on your career, what does great leadership mean to you?

A strong leader has a leadership brand: they convey their identity, distinctiveness and value. They have a real executive presence, with gravitas, confidence and inclusiveness. They're strong communicators but also good listeners, able to read and adapt to their team.

Authenticity and willingness to be present is key. Whether it's walking the cosmetics hall or the QVC floor, that presence gives you authority and builds trust. It's important when working with big brands too, putting across your leadership brand while sharing a vision and building strategies together.

What advice would you give the next generation of beauty leaders?

Know what you're good at and excel in it. Focus on your skillset and maximise it to build your confidence, but also your abilities within that niche. At the same time, pinpoint what you're not good at and build a supportive team around those areas.

Having a support system is also critical, whether that's family, friends, leaders or mentors. Have people you can have honest conversations with

> Be open to direct feedback, as that's how you learn and grow. I'd also encourage being a mentor yourself... it's a great experience and you always learn from it too

and soundboard against. Be open to direct feedback, as that's how you learn and grow. I'd also encourage being a mentor yourself. It's a great experience and you always learn from it too.

Why do you feel diversity and inclusion is such an integral part of the beauty industry?

It's so important that the beauty industry stays relevant, and we can do that by celebrating true diversity – whether it's hearts, mind, bodies, the way we live or the way we love. At QVC, it's an integral part of our company culture. We're very conscious about truly reflecting our customers – who are usually above the age of 50 – in our models and the imagery we use, for example. And internally, we make sure we've got a constant dialogue where team members can speak up and challenge if they think something's not right. We've still got a way to go in the beauty industry as a whole, but it's fantastic to see the progress that has been made over the last few years.

What excites you most about the future of the beauty industry?

Beauty brands and retailers have a sophisticated approach to engaging and educating customers that's always evolving. Even in recessions or during periods like the pandemic, there's constant innovation and investment, and always something new and exciting. Customers are more educated now. They want to understand product heritage, ingredients, componentry, techniques. As an industry, that expertise and curiosity keeps us on our toes.

But, above all, the constant change in beauty is what excites me most. It's an incredible industry to be a part of.

MICHELLE SHIGEMASA
Beauty Industry Veteran

Michelle Shigemasa is an accomplished CEO and General Manager with decades of diverse experience, a unique blend of large company (corporate) know-how, and the ability to cultivate success in smaller, fast-paced start-ups. Michelle has led global companies such as Murad skincare and r.e.m. beauty (Ariana Grande's beauty line) as CEO, and spent 13 years at Estée Lauder-owned Smashbox, leading North America.

How did you get into the beauty industry?

In truth, it was not intentional. I began my career at the luxury US department store Nordstrom and worked my way up the ranks to ultimately become their youngest buyer. One day, sitting in the stock room, I realised I missed leading large teams like I did as a Department Manager. My friend, who was the Cosmetics Buyer, asked me if I would help her launch a new brand at Nordstrom called Bobbi Brown Cosmetics. I didn't know anything about cosmetics or had even heard of Bobbi Brown, but I decided to go for it. As fate would have it, I fell in love with beauty: Empowering confidence and helping people feel better about themselves; who wouldn't want to do that? It's something that still drives my passion today.

You've since had fantastic breadth to your experience. How much of that was a conscious plan?

Early in my career at Bobbi Brown, I moved into every field role imaginable. I learnt that I loved connecting with consumers. I eventually moved to Smashbox as Head of Sales, and at that point, I realised my career would be in beauty. Smashbox was a very small, founder-led brand when I joined, and eventually was acquired by Estée Lauder, who gave me more responsibility as General Manager of North America. From there, I had an opportunity to helm Murad Skincare, which was the perfect opportunity to have the autonomy of running a global brand as CEO. After four and a half years, I moved into private equity, which was always something I was interested in doing.

> "Be true to yourself. Don't try to conform to a mould of what you think a leader needs to be.

As you reflect, what are some of your biggest learnings?

One of my biggest learnings as a CEO is being able to garner expertise across all aspects of a global business, from supply chain, finance, marketing and product development to commercial, and connecting all the dots across the business to support your strategy. This high touch across all departments requires your focus to pivot from

meeting to meeting, which can be intense and a skill set you must acquire as a CEO. The constant learning I've taken since the beginning of my career is understanding that you're only as good as your team. When you invest deeply in your team, they invest back. My secret sauce is that people want to work hard for me, knowing they will be valued and appreciated. My team has always been a key reason for my success throughout the years.

How do you think the beauty industry has evolved regarding diversity and inclusion?

I believe diversity and inclusion are even more critical today. Consumers expect more than a good product; they want an authentic connection to your brand. They want to be a part of the conversation. Putting the consumer at the heart of everything you do and authentically representing them is a big part. Being inclusive is not only about skin color; it's also about age, orientation, sex, and body inclusivity. Whether it's the innovative product you create, shade offering, or the models/brand ambassadors you engage, it must serve and represent your consumer and their needs.

Where do you think our biggest challenge is in terms of making progress?

Early in my career, there was apparent bias; you had to look a certain way, dress a certain way, and fit into your brand's 'image', which was usually prescribed. Having a family and a career was also more challenging because not everyone believed you could do both. Today, I think most people want to do the right thing and be inclusive, but there is still unconscious bias. As leaders, we must continue building awareness and educating ourselves and our teams about bias.

If you were talking to the next generation of leaders, what would your advice be?

Be true to yourself. Don't try to conform to a mould of what you think a leader needs to be. I spent years trying to be more aggressive, less empathetic, and an 'A type' personality when I was not. Once I learnt to accept myself and embrace my unique skill sets and who I was, I became more confident and, in turn, more successful.

What keeps you excited about the beauty space?

Staying at the forefront of innovation is really exciting for me. The beauty space is highly competitive and constantly evolving, which makes it challenging and exhilarating at the same time. Creating remarkable products that solve problems, do things in a better way, and over-deliver on the promise is what innovation means to me. It is a true privilege to work in an industry that allows you to combine creativity and strategy to help consumers be more confident and live happier lives. That's the reason I'm still here and will continue to be!

REVOLUTION
BEAUTY LONDON

LAUREN BRINDLEY
Chief Executive Officer
Revolution Beauty

Lauren Brindley has been CEO at Revolution Beauty since September 2023, following more than 20 years in the retail and beauty industry with Boots and Walgreens Boots Alliance in the US and Asia. Today, Revolution Beauty exists to develop incredible, cruelty-free beauty for everyone, made accessible in shade and affordable for all.

Looking back at your career, what have been your biggest learnings or reflections?

Without a doubt, my biggest learning is to never say no. Instead, ask: why not? Some of the most rewarding moments in my career and in my personal life have come from thinking 'why not' and diving into a situation that was out of my comfort zone.

When I moved from Boots UK to Asia as a Country Manager, for example, I was managing across very different cultures and dealing with a huge international retailer, selling into AS Watson. The amount I learnt about people, culture, and pivoting brands was immense. Similarly, when I moved to the US with two young children, the experience of going from a European to a US corporate structure and being a beauty expert in a healthcare world – it opened my mind. If I had shied away from those decisions, I wouldn't have had the personal growth I have now.

> "What's interesting now is the shift from inclusivity to uniqueness.

I've also learnt important lessons about being yourself. As you progress through your career you hear so much advice from so many different people – but that advice is often based on their own experience, rather than tailored to you. As a result, you often mimic others and follow paths that aren't suited. I remember one boss saying, "I don't know if I know who the real Lauren is", and it made me realise I had been changing myself for everyone else.

As a leader, how do you see this playing out today?

Happily, I think younger generations are much more comfortable being themselves, which I love. Authenticity and bringing your full self to work is such an integral part of the conversation. At Revolution Beauty, our younger team members are very comfortable being true to themselves in the workplace. I think this is a reflection of their generation, but also the environment we create. We hire for different thinking, for experience, for creativity, and we look for those who push boundaries.

What does great leadership look like to you?

I think great leadership is about vision, and it's about people. A leader's vision is innovative and it pushes boundaries, but it's also based on others' perspectives. A good leader crafts their vision through listening to their teams and spotting the opportunities on the horizon. On the people side, it's about making sure you've not just got the most talented team, but that you're empowering them,

coaching them, motivating them and inspiring them to go and do what they thought was impossible.

If I think back to some of the people that I've worked for, the best leaders are those who I would run into war for. They're people who inspired me, challenged me, and pushed me to succeed. That to me is great leadership.

What excites you about the beauty industry?

So much! Beauty is always going to continue to grow. It's a never-ending need and desire that's constantly changing, which is what I find so interesting. I love the fact that beauty evolves to reflect how society is changing: consumers' lifestyles, their thoughts, how they communicate. We're early adopters of what other industries end up learning about years later, whether it's ecommerce or TikTok. It keeps things fresh and exciting, and I think that's why people join the beauty industry and then never want to leave.

Beauty also has a very unique relationship with its consumer. We have a big responsibility to ensure the teams creating the future of beauty are truly reflective of the consumers and communities we're designing for. We have to authentically understand the needs of different consumers.

What's interesting now is the shift from inclusivity to uniqueness. It's about finding products that suit your individual style, skin tone, or hair type, which is exciting but can also present challenges for us as brands. It's no longer about a singular look, but helping consumers understand what different products do and how to layer them to achieve their desired outcome. At Revolution, the consumer tells us what's possible and what they need, then we create that for them. You have to listen harder and use data because there are more nuances, but it's also much more interesting.

I think that open dialogue with consumers, using their input to shape product and strategy, is more unique to beauty. We've let go of control a bit more than other industries because we were one of the fastest to digitally innovate. It's much more of a co-creation world now.

What advice would you give to the next generation of beauty leaders?

I'd tell them to push boundaries. Positive change comes from pushing for something better, new, more effective, and different. And I'd tell them to have a voice, and to not be afraid to bring new ideas forward.

Rodial

MARIA HATZISTEFANIS
Chief Executive Officer and Founder
The Rodial Group

A former Beauty Editor, Maria Hatzistefanis is the founder of skincare brands Rodial and Nip+Fab. Over the last 25 years, she has grown the business as its CEO and founder, with the Rodial brand available in 35 countries and both brands now in over 10,000 stores internationally. A three-times published author, she is also an investor in Dragon's Den Greece.

How did you break into the beauty industry?

Fashion and beauty have been passions of mine from a very young age. I was born and raised on a tiny Greek island, and I would go to a local newsagent once a month to buy the international fashion magazines. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life, but I knew the type of woman I wanted to be. The first time I interacted with beauty was when I found a part time job working for Seventeen Magazine in Athens and I saw there was a gap in the market for a serious skincare range that offered targeted treatments. I moved to the U.S., did an MBA at Columbia University and got a job in Corporate Finance at Salomon Brothers that brought me to the U.K. At the beginning, everything was exciting and I was learning a lot. But two years into it, I started losing my enthusiasm and got fired. That was the moment I realised I wanted to be in a creative industry and start my own business. I went back to the idea that I had while at Seventeen Magazine and started my own beauty brand, Rodial. I didn't get investment when I tried, so instead, I started my business from home with £20,000 of savings.

You've been on quite a journey. What has that been like?

The first breakthrough we had was in year five when we were about to launch our first anti-ageing serum. It was everything I wanted it to be – plumping, lifting and hydrating. The designer created a white bottle with the name 'Anti-Aging Serum' written on it, but I began to question how we were going to compete with massive advertising budgets, campaigns and celebrities. We would get lost. So, I looked at the list of ingredients. I saw that one of them related to viper venom, so I said to my team: "Let's call it Snake Serum." They thought it was crazy, but we had nothing to lose. Snake Serum went viral and that was the product that put Rodial on the map.

> "Diversity and inclusion is not just about colour, it's also about age and background.

As CEO, what has been required from you as a leader, and have you had to adapt your style as the business has grown and evolved?

Not having external investment really helped me to understand how you can make noise in the market with very little. That means we're disciplined; we're

never going to spend more than we can afford. The other part is the team. We are a private, female-led business made up of about 100 people and I am involved in every single recruitment. It's important to me that the fit is right and we're in a position to make that happen. My team feels very proud of that.

My management style is very entrepreneurial - I want my team to run the business in the same way I run the business. I hire people who will come in and carve their own path. Obviously, as a CEO and founder, I am available to put out fires wherever they are. There are days where I have to focus on the commercial element and other times I'm out there telling the story by doing speaking engagements, or creating tutorials. You're wearing so many hats as a CEO and founder. That's the most exciting thing for me.

Have you had mentors or role models who have helped guide you?

It was more about finding my own way rather than having a specific mentor to guide me, but I've always been good at networking, so I would go to conferences and connect with other founders who were going on the same journey as me. I've drawn energy from people at the same level as me, and when I have helped them, they have helped me back.

What does diversity and inclusion mean to you?

Diversity and inclusion is not just about colour, it's also about age and background. Having people from different ethnic backgrounds is as important as working with people who are more mature alongside those who are younger. It's useful to have that air of maturity and calm in a business.

Looking back, do you feel you've become the woman you had envisaged when you were reading magazines growing up?

It's been a journey. Sometimes, when there's a lot going on, I wake up and feel like I'm just the girl who got fired from banking. Reflecting back on 25 years, if I wake up every day and I'm still excited to do what I do, it's that excitement that keeps me all in.

Alongside Rodial, it's important for me to have other projects on the go. I've been a Dragon on Dragon's Den Greece for two seasons and we're filming a third which I think is a little ironic because I never received investment. But being on the other side has given me great perspective - I am as passionate about giving back and sharing my knowledge as I am about running my business. I don't want to just define myself as the CEO and founder of the Rodial Group, at this point in my life, I want to get involved in as many exciting opportunities as I can.

SHISEIDO

ALBERTO NOÉ
Chief Executive Officer EMEA
Shiseido

Alberto Noé was appointed as Chief Executive for EMEA at Shiseido in March 2024, following 11 years at the Japanese beauty group. Alberto previously worked for L'Oréal as GM for Lancôme Italy, as well as Commercial Director for Chanel.

How has your leadership style evolved throughout your career?

My leadership style has been shaped by various experiences across different companies and cultures. I've learnt the importance of understanding and motivating diverse teams, adapting to different organisational cultures, and balancing tradition with innovation. At Shiseido, I've focused on building a strong sense of belonging among team members while driving transformation and growth.

We've taken a different approach compared to other companies in our sector. While they often place young managers in positions with limited scope, we give our Country Managers complete control to lead, manage and drive the business in their respective countries. This means we invest in senior, experienced managers. It's more costly, but it's our recipe for competing and winning in the market.

What advice would you give to young professionals aspiring to leadership roles?

First, be open to different experiences and don't be afraid to take risks. My career path wasn't linear, but each role taught me valuable lessons. Second, invest in your skills and knowledge – companies such as Danone and L'Oréal provided excellent training that served me well throughout my career. Finally, value your team and foster a sense of belonging. Success is a collective effort, and nurturing talent is crucial for long-term success.

How do you see the future of the beauty industry, in terms of innovation and sustainability?

The beauty industry is constantly evolving, with increasing focus on innovation, sustainability and digital transformation. At Shiseido, we're investing in these areas while maintaining our core values and heritage. It's crucial to balance tradition with modern consumer demands and technological advancements. Sustainability, in particular, is becoming a key factor in consumer choices and business operations.

> “
>
> Success is a collective effort, and nurturing talent is crucial for long-term success.

What's your perspective on diversity and inclusion in the beauty industry?

Diversity is crucial in our industry. At Shiseido, we've created an environment that embraces different backgrounds and experiences. This diversity allows us to better serve our global market and contribute to the group's overall success. We're proud that

our talents are recognised worldwide, thanks to the results we've delivered in recent years. Our organisation is a great example of diversity within the group. I'm Italian, leading a French-based organisation of a Japanese group, and we have Country Managers from various backgrounds.

What have some of your learnings been as you've stepped into seniority?

Well, I believe that you need to be completely open-minded, because sometimes you hear things far from what you were expecting. And to accept these things is the most difficult exercise for a human being. If you spend time with your people, they contribute more and more. To listen, you need time. I'm a very driven person in terms of results, but sometimes this obliges you to say: "Sit down. Wait a second, don't go too fast, because you need to understand things."

Have there been role models or mentors in your life?

There is one person that I really go to. It's a close friend, but also a mentor for me. We have known each other since university and grown up together. I can really ask his point of view when I need to make big decisions. I love people that challenge me. Reaching the position I have today is thanks to people who were stronger than me in some aspects. I've always looked for people who are able to bring me something that I don't have. The best leaders in my life have been the ones able to select the best talent around them.

What advice would you give to the next generation?

Always remember that we are not alone. It's always a matter of people together. And if you succeed alone, who are you going to celebrate with? If you have been able to compose a team of people that are connected, they will be your best supporters and they will do everything to make you succeed. And this is, I believe, the secret if you want to be successful. You need to share the success.

The way I keep my energy high is thanks to the people around me, who I love to laugh and enjoy spending time with. Because this is the energy I need to be serious, to take decisions and to fight on every day.

SHISEIDO

CHARLES DE MONTALIVET
Managing Director, UK & Ireland
Shiseido

Charles de Montalivet has been leading in the beauty industry for more than 20 years, having spent time at L'Oréal before joining Japanese skincare brand Shiseido in 2019 where he leads the UK & Ireland market as Managing Director.

How did you land in beauty?

By chance, as I worked in consulting before, and then I decided after five years I wanted to broaden my horizons. So I decided to take a year and go and travel the world. When I came back, I just wanted to have a career and job that was more meaningful. I met some great people at L'Oréal through a friend, and I started in travel retail.

What shaped your leadership style?

I was promoted rapidly at L'Oréal. One of the key learnings of my career was that I was promoted among my peers, and that's not easy. For example, you have to suddenly accept that you're still with them, but you're not one of them, and you have to change. Actually, it's led my view of leadership. I always compare it to football – there is always a guy in a suit on the side of the pitch, moving and yelling and screaming. And there is another guy, another leader, who is the one running with the others. He's making his own mistakes. So I want to be that captain more than the guy in the suit screaming. I've chosen to have a leadership style that is more collaborative.

What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced?

One of my toughest roles was GM for fragrance and designer brands, for Europe. And there I had to face two challenges. The first was that I was not promoted among my peers – I was parachuted in among very senior GMs. I was facing people who were much older than me, and had never heard of me before. So I could see resistance. The first challenge is how you motivate people when you're not seen as legitimate or when you're not as expected.

The second challenge was being very exposed to top management. I suddenly went to meetings with those super top people, where you need to know your figures, your business, your P&Ls, and you need to be visionary at the same time. And I wasn't prepared. I made mistakes and I lost battles. The learning there is, what made me win before wasn't what would make me win here. That was a role that really shaped me for the future.

> "I've chosen to have a leadership style that is more collaborative

From a D&I perspective, how is the company evolving?

We took that topic a few years ago and did an audit because I think you're always biased when you talk about D&I. There was a lot of red, a bit of orange, amber, and then we said, "Where do we start?" I mean, you would need four permanent

people to tackle all that. And it's not the Japanese culture. So we said, choose battles. We're not going to be perfect. And that's how we talk to the team. Acknowledge that we are not there yet. Acknowledge that it will take time. But, at the same time, we want to be talking about it.

How important has your coach been as you've evolved as a leader?

Massively important. She's been coaching all my direct reports, too. I remember when Covid hit, every session of our leadership team meeting she would open with 30 minutes to lift our minds, bring a bit of meditation. I'm still amazed that some people are resistant to coaches. I mean, the pressure that we have… you need people who watch you and say, "Hey, Charles, what's going on?". I do find it massively helpful.

You've been very good at putting yourself in uncomfortable situations. Has that been purposeful?

I do believe that it's part of my personality. I think it comes from my around-the-world trip. I'm never happier than when you drop me in the middle of Vietnam and I look at people. They carry massive things on their bikes, they eat weird things that you would not touch. And I love saying, wow, I'm so far away from where I've been brought up.

I'm terrified by monotony. I'm terrified of falling into a routine where you don't see anything. And so I need to extract myself on a regular basis and put myself in uncomfortable situations that force me to break my habits.

What is going to keep you excited about this beauty space?

There are a few things that make it very interesting. You are still making people more beautiful, look better, feel better, you're building confidence. And the second thing, it's fast paced, but there's also brand equity. There's always newness, lots of innovation and, at the same time, you're still building brands for the long term. And the third is, you're meeting incredible people. I mean, where else do you meet people with such diversity as on the shop floor in beauty.

SMART WORKS

JULIETTA DEXTER
Group Chair
Smart Works

Julietta Dexter founded The Communications Store in 1995, offering PR, communications and brand building services in the sectors of beauty, wellness, luxury, fashion and lifestyle. She is currently chair of Smart Works Charity, working on women's unemployment. Smart Works is a nationwide charity that dresses and gives coaching to all women for interview and job success. Julietta is a board member of Northeastern University, London.

What have been your biggest learnings in the beauty industry?

Firstly, it is an absolutely wonderful, gorgeous, important industry and it attracts some wonderful people. Second of all, I've really beaten a march around fighting the fight for beauty not being perceived as a frivolous, superfluous industry. Beauty is becoming much more therapeutic as well as aesthetic. Many people don't understand what it actually takes to build a beauty brand successfully and for the long-term. Often business-minded people can have very inflated ideas of what the numbers are going to look like, hoping for huge volume and high margins, particularly in the startup phase. It is hard to build a beauty brand and there is also a fair amount of luck involved too.

What challenges have you had to overcome?

Well, building businesses for sure is a huge challenge. Very often, people think that the most difficult part is launching a brand. Actually, the hard part is post-launch when the excitement is over, reality kicks in and the hard graft starts. Selling. What's really hard is the sustainability of the brand, a brand staying alive over a very long period of time. And there are not many products and brands that really do stand the test of time.

What does great leadership mean to you?

Very simply service to the organisation and to others. Leadership is not about power. Leadership is about the duty of care of looking after the organisation. When things get really hard, you have to look after the whole rather than favour one individual or situation. I have always used the analogy of a tree as the "org chart" of a business. If there's one person on the top of the tree and everybody else is underneath them, it creates hierarchy. So, to me, the org chart is a tree where the Board and the senior leadership team are the roots that have to keep the organisation strong, even below ground. They are almost invisible because their responsibility should be to try to grow the next generation of talent. The trunk of the tree is the solid values of the business. My personal values were always to try to be clever, considered, considerate and also countercultural. I tried to have these values front of mind in all decision-making processes. The branches of the tree are the staff, and the leaves are perhaps the most junior staff members and interns, and then the work and the clients. They are all part of one living, breathing, connected organism. Then, as you know, the leaves drop and it becomes a symbiotic, beautiful organism.

Why do you feel that D&I is so integral to the beauty industry?

The beauty industry, as we continue to evolve as a species, should be there for everybody. And deeply regrettably, white people historically had greater wealth, so businesses built their profit and revenue

on the greatest market size and opportunity. It's a very simple business principle that is now changing – and so it should. Because every person of whatever gender, race, colour or creed should be able to go into a shop and feel that they're catered for in every way.

How have role models been important in your life?

Role models are really, really important and I've been very lucky. One of my first role models was the Publishing Director of national magazines, Lizzie Kershaw, who helped me a great deal. In the beauty industry I've always admired Kathy Phillips. Kathy and I share a love of yoga, and she has taught me so much. Kathy was Health & Beauty Director of British Vogue for many years and has really led the way. Josephine Fairley would be another person that has been close to me and always really encouraged me. I spend quite a lot of time mentoring people, which I love, because I think that if we've got skills to share with one another, why wouldn't we?

What excites you about the future of the beauty industry?

What I find interesting about the beauty industry is what I call "multifunctioning" beauty, where cosmetics will become therapeutic, almost verging on the medical. We are moving through to the idea that taking personal responsibility for your wellbeing and how you show up every day perhaps isn't so superfluous. Your skin is your largest organ and is a good barometer of your overall health. If somebody is smoking, drinking, eating unhealthily, it shows.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I think one thing would be to have looked after myself more and slept more. Because then my brain capacity would have been less anxious and more creative. I also would have believed in myself more, and I would have had the confidence to believe that what I was doing was good enough. When you're young, you're ambitious and you're energetic, and you are more open to risk taking. And perhaps as you get older, you kind of settle and are a little bit more discerning and confident in the decisions that you make. I've made good and bad decisions. Had successes and failures. You learn a whole lot more from the failures than the successes.

If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

When I was a little girl, I wanted to be a dancer.

VASILIKI PETROU
Former Chief Executive Officer
Unilever Prestige

Vasiliki Petrou completed her MBA at Columbia Business School, New York City, before spending 19 years at Procter & Gamble. After working for brands across multiple countries including Canada, Taiwan, Greece, Switzerland and the UK, Vasiliki became the founding Chief Executive of Unilever's Prestige Division in 2014.

You have been in many situations where you're doing something new and disruptive. Was tenacity and resilience something that you always had?

I think I come from a family where we always were trained in hard work ethic. I was very much a kid who always wanted to excel. I was curious, so I guess that helped. P&G was a great training ground in leadership skills – I think I definitely benefited from that.

How has that shaped your approach to leadership?

The biggest thing for me is the ability to have a vision. What are you trying to do? And to co-create the vision with your people. For me, the most important thing is to teach people that you have to care first, whether it's caring for people, caring for the business or caring to make a difference in the world. I always say that if you do all three, then the rest flows in the right direction.

> "Practice the values of ethics, integrity, making an impact, leading people for a common good. And the rest will look after you.

How much of an impact have role models, mentors and coaches had on your career?

A lot – good and bad. Because it's not only good bosses – everybody has had bad bosses along the way. And I always say to people, don't discourage yourself with bad bosses, because you always learn what not to do. My bosses taught me how to not to be afraid, to be fearless, to be bold. You learn along the way if you are in a good company with good values and good people. Everybody will collaborate to make you succeed.

How important has fearlessness been to you?

It's never easy. Because when you have a bold vision, there will be 50 people who will tell you: "No, we don't do things like that." But for me, what worked was always having a very clear vision of what I wanted to do and being uncompromising about it. I would put my foot down, especially in the early days. And then I would say to my team, just focus. Do not listen to noise, just focus on delivering the business. We need to earn credibility for our strategic direction. So I think the learning is: have a clear vision, a clear point of view, and be fearless about defending it, especially if you know that this is the right thing to do.

What's the biggest learning of your career?

Never worry about what others think of you. Most people worry about how they are perceived by people, even the super confident people. Now, obviously, I have battled this over the years, but just focus on you. The only thing you can control is you. Practice the values of ethics, integrity, making an impact, leading people for a common good. And the rest will look after you. People will think good things and bad things anyway. This is human nature, because that's how the world is. So why worry about that? Just focus on what you need to do.

Why do you feel it's so important that diversity and inclusion is a top agenda item for our industry?

Because I come from the point of view of diversity of thought. I have a vested interest because my daughter has ADHD. What people, unfortunately, call disability is not a disability. It's a different way of thinking. This is where you get the extraordinary ideas. Diversity of thought always brings the best results and moves the world to a better place.

There is a lot to be done from every angle. Women are still not reaching their leadership positions on board roles in the UK and other countries.

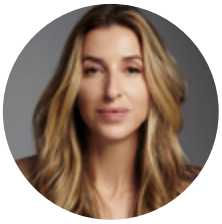
I've always been a champion of women. But recently I've had examples of women telling me that other women were not kind to them. And my message is that it needs to stop. That insecurity needs to stop. We need to help each other – men and women.

It seems you have an instinct for when it's right to disrupt yourself and move on to something new. How do you know that it's time?

For me, it's always – are you growing or not? Are you comfortable? If you're comfortable, you are not growing. Are you pushing yourself? It could be in leading people, it could be in a different sector. But these are the questions that I would ask.

What keeps you excited about the beauty space?

I love beauty because it's very dynamic. It's very competitive, so it keeps you alert and pushes you to think differently. I was always obsessed about being on the verge of disruption, to always see the waves coming ahead in the next three to five years. But I think the most important impact is the one you have on people. This ability to make an impact and change lives, for me, is one of the reasons I want to be part of beauty and wellness.



VICTORIA BECKHAM
BEAUTY

KATIA BEAUCHAMP
Chief Executive Officer
Victoria Beckham Beauty

In 2022, Katia Beauchamp became the CEO of Victoria Beckham Beauty. She joined the fast growth business to accelerate it further, while building a brand and company that becomes a category leader in luxury beauty. Prior to this, Katia was Co-founder and CEO at Birchbox, a subscription box for beauty samples, which defined the category of subscription ecommerce.

Can you tell us a bit about your career journey – how did you start out in the beauty industry?

It all began with an internship at Estée Lauder during college. Truthfully, I didn't seek it out because of a passion for beauty, but because it was the most coveted internship available at my college at the time. But it was totally formative. I met so many high-powered executives, from Leonard Lauder and Evelyn Lauder, and spent time understanding how a business works. I remember thinking that I didn't realise that you could have a career with rigour and intellect but also so much passion. It was the perfect mix of left and right brain.

> If your goal is creating an enduring business, you have to earn the right by truly seeing, respecting and loving your consumer in an authentic way.

After that internship, I tried finance and real estate for a while. But I wanted to move faster in my career, so I decided to apply to business school – and it was at Harvard where I first encountered the concept of entrepreneurship at a meaningful level. I became obsessed with this opportunity to truly understand my own capabilities, and to focus relentlessly on a project that you care deeply about.

My best friend and I began writing a business plan as more of a practical exercise, and brought together the concept of Birchbox over Thanksgiving 2009. We got so excited that we skipped the plan, wrote a one-pager and just launched! Everyone told us it wouldn't work because nobody paid for samples – but our premise was that customers would if the samples were good.

And, against all odds, Birchbox was wildly successful when we launched in 2010. Selling samples became an entire industry. I went from a 23-year-old student at business school to a 27-year-old CEO with hundreds of people working for me in offices across six countries. Over 12 years, our business model transformed dramatically behind the scenes to adapt to shifts in the market and competition. It's so hard to summarise what Birchbox was like. It was privilege, heartache, the surprise of my life, my firstborn, and my first real job.

How do you feel that journey as a founder has shaped you personally and as a leader?

I've always had an unjustified belief that I can do anything, coupled with an expectation that it will be really hard, and that I'll likely fail many times over. That mindset served me well as a founder, as I learnt that success has luck baked in – the timing, the people around you, and factors beyond your control.

The hardest years at Birchbox were actually the most meaningful for my personal growth. I was doing the work to become the leader I wanted to be, the person I wanted to be, and creating a higher purpose for hundreds of people, and in turn they were creating purpose for me. That period of setbacks provided a beautiful reciprocity.

You've transitioned from founder to now working with other founders. What has this experience been like?

It's been wonderful – and I knew it would be, because I was looking forward to learning more as a leader. There's something unique about being a founder CEO, but it's been refreshing to come at brands, ideas, and concepts with more objectivity. You can be more straightforward in interpreting market signals, rather than feeling a protectiveness over the original idea. I still have that core fearlessness, but also more perspective.

What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders, especially women?

I'd say that we as women need to collude. If we're going to drive change, we need to do it together. I walked into 2010 thinking equality was achieved – I'd gone to Harvard! I'd started a business! – but quickly realised the challenges women still face in leadership.

As women, we should be able to have the same level of success as men, but get there and lead in a different way. I think we need to redefine feminism, and help everyone recognise the differences between men and women, and see where those differences can be incredibly powerful.

What keeps you excited about the beauty industry today?

So many different things! The activity, pace and high level of competition means you can never stand still, which fits my personality. There's also an exciting opportunity to build healthy, respectful relationships with consumers who have more power than ever before.

If your goal is to create an enduring business, you have to earn the right by truly seeing, respecting and loving your consumer in an authentic way. Surprising and delighting with integrity is an exciting challenge in such a discretionary category where you don't actually need any of our products. But if you can create that healthy symbiosis, you've done something really beautiful.

waldencast

HIND SEBTI
Founder
Waldencast

Hind Sebti founded Waldencast in 2019 to build a best-in-class beauty and wellness multi-brand platform. Hind has 20 years of beauty sector experience, gained first at Procter & Gamble and then at L'Oréal, where she held marketing and general management positions in iconic brands like L'Oréal Paris, Maybelline and Redken. Hind is also the founder of Whind, a new beauty and lifestyle brand developed as part of Waldencast Brands.

Can you walk us through your career journey so far?

I was born and raised in Morocco, and after completing my French high school education which was focused on science and maths, the natural path was to pursue engineering in France. But I always knew that I wanted to work in the beauty industry – I loved how the topic of beauty linked to culture, to wellbeing, and how it could impact people's lives for the better.

After getting an Engineering degree, I landed my first job at Procter & Gamble (P&G) in the supply chain function for the beauty category. I very soon realised that my passion was brand building and took my first career defining brave move by asking to move to marketing and against all and it worked! And so began a wonderful journey of building iconic brands like Olay, Clairol and Gillette Venus. After 10 years at P&G, I joined L'Oréal and held leadership roles across brands like fabulous brands such as L'Oréal Paris, Redken, and Maybelline.

Around my mid-30s, I started contemplating the next 20 years of my career. And this is where my previously whispering entrepreneurial passion became loud and clear. That's when I Co-Founded Waldencast with my Co-Founded, Michel Brousset, with a vision to build a global best in class beauty and wellness platform that is the "home" of independent beauty brands. We started in 2019 by investing in early-stage brands, then created an incubator to launch our own. In 2022, we listed Waldencast on the Nasdaq and acquired established brands Milk Makeup and Obagi.

What motivated you to make bold career moves, like switching from supply chain to marketing or leaving corporate roles to become an entrepreneur?

I've always valued freedom – the freedom to shape my own path. I was terrified of waking up at 75 and realising I hadn't lived life on my terms. So, at various milestones, I made conscious and unconventional decisions which were driven by my instincts of what I was good at.

My first instinctive move was early on at P&G when I moved from supply chain to marketing. An unheard of move. But that was made a reality thanks to my Marketing Director who believed in and championed me. It taught me that if you don't ask, you don't get! The worst that can happen is someone says no.

Becoming an entrepreneur was never a risk as I was betting on myself and I knew that I could only grow as a beauty leader from it.

What have you learnt about leadership in your career?

I believe great leadership starts with having a vision, and then empowering and enabling its execution. I think a lot of people have one or the other: a great vision or the drive to execute it. But you need both to succeed. And no matter how "strong" you might be individually, success is learning to deliver through others, by bringing them on the journey, enabling and empowering them to execute.

And leadership styles come in all shapes and forms and the one that will serve you best is the one that is "authentically" you. You can learn and, be inspired by various styles and people (the more the better) but never mould yourself on them as the growth and success is in finding the style that is truly yours. And authenticity comes through at every level and detail of your day-to-day. I was reminded of this recently, when I interviewed a brilliant young woman for a position in our team. I asked her why amongst all the offers she had she wanted to come and work with us. And she told me that she had seen a video of me expressing genuine emotion – tears of happiness! – during our Nasdaq listing. And she had loved the fact that she'd seen that, and told me that she felt it had given her, and would give others, permission to be her own authentic self. I just loved that.

What is it that keeps you excited about the beauty industry?

I feel incredibly lucky to work in an industry that combines my work, my passion, and my hobby. To be successful in beauty, you must genuinely love people and have boundless curiosity about human experiences and emotions.

Beauty is not just about aesthetics; it's about deeply understanding different cultures, identities, and how people connect with themselves and others. This human-centric aspect makes the beauty business ever-growing and profoundly fulfilling. After 25 years, I'm more excited than ever because this is truly a sector of desire and emotion. You create new ways for people to express themselves, celebrate their identities, and find confidence and joy.

WAR PAINT.
FOR MEN

MATT LUMB
Chief Executive Officer
War Paint For Men

Matt Lumb moved into the beauty industry in 2010, becoming CEO for the Tangle Teezer hairbrush brand. Having successfully overseen the international growth and development of the business, Matt was appointed CEO at innovative men's makeup brand War Paint For Men in 2019.

Tell us about your early career.

I'm an accountant by trade and worked for a company in the north west for 12 years. I met Shaun Pulfrey [founder of Tangle Teezer] at a software seminar, and offered to help him with his financial reports. After six months, I joined full time.

We grew really quickly, but it was really fun, and revenues went from a million to two million to four million, to almost thirty million, year-on-year. Towards the end of 2017, I was pretty exhausted, and it was time for me to do something else. I left in March 2018, and was introduced to Danny Gray, the guy who developed War Paint – makeup for men. I was intrigued.

What does disruption in the beauty industry look like?

Danny published an advert, which got picked up on Twitter, and it went viral really quickly. But 99% of the reaction was negative, and the narrative was toxic masculinity. But it got people talking about makeup for men.

Part of the attraction for me at Tangle Teezer was the fact it was very disruptive. It was the most innovative thing that had happened to the hair industry in a long time. If anyone asks me about makeup for men, my go-to response always is: "If you don't want to wear makeup, that's absolutely fine with me." I think if you asked most women why they wear makeup before heading out on a Saturday night they'll tell you it's because they feel that they will look better and they'll feel more confident. And for me, there's no difference. It seems to me that this is one of the very few areas – men wearing makeup – where there is still massive pushback.

What are the unique challenges you face as a CEO in men's makeup?

We've made really good progress through the first men's makeup brand in the air with Virgin Atlantic, the world's first men's makeup counter in John Lewis, and listings in Harvey Nichols. We also opened the world's first men's makeup store on London's iconic Carnaby St. But I think our challenge – and part of the journey – has been around having the conversation. I still don't fully understand why nobody would dream of saying something derogative to Tom Cruise or Brad Pitt or Leo DiCaprio. They're in makeup all the time, but if I want to wear it to go to the pub because I'm conscious about the scar on my throat, I'll immediately be ridiculed.

We sponsored Norwich City Football Club training kits, which was surreal for me. They got in touch with us because they liked our approach to inclusivity. It was a really good fit ethically and morally. Everything we've done is to try to have the same messaging and the same branding, and we're absolutely not ashamed of what we do.

How do you create a positive work culture?

If you're going to call people out when they haven't done something right, then make sure you're the first person to tell them when they've done a really

> My whole career has been built on getting the right people, treating them exactly as I would want to be treated, and making sure there's plenty of progression for them as well as the brand.

good job. Don't take other people's credit. I think as CEO, when something goes well, that's down to the team. And when something doesn't, that's on you.

My whole career has been built on getting the right people, treating them exactly as I would want to be treated, and making sure there's plenty of progression for them as well as the brand. And that culture is absolutely everything – it comes from the CEO and the founder, and it trickles down.

What's your strategy for creating success in business?

One thing I've realised over the past 15 years is that luck plays a far bigger part than I ever thought in a successful business. Sometimes you just need to be in the right place, you need a bit of luck, you need that one person to believe in you – and that's easier said than done. Sometimes it just all comes together and works.

I'm not responsible for the success of Tangle Teezer. It was a combination of a fantastic founder, an amazing product and a brilliant and talented team. And I think if you can get all three to click, then you've got half a chance of making a business a success.

What does being a great leader mean to you?

I've worked with people who just treat people like garbage and then demand their respect because they're the CEO. There's a massive difference between being a leader and being a boss, and leaders who earn respect versus leaders who command and demand respect. They are two very different things.

People talk about strategy and vision and of course they're vitally important. But ultimately you do your best to make sure things don't fall over and you make sure everybody knows they're playing their part and that they feel valued. You're also the link between the shareholders and the founder and between the founder and the wider team. Try and treat everyone with equal respect.

About us

About The MBS Group

The MBS Group is a leading sector-specialist B-Corp executive search firm advising all consumer-facing industries, with a particular focus on the Beauty industry. Working across a spectrum from established businesses to emerging start-ups, clients consider us to be the partner of choice when searching for critical leadership roles due to our comprehensive understanding of beauty companies in a constantly changing environment. We work at Board level and on executive positions across all functions of strategic importance.

For more information, visit
www.thembsgroup.co.uk

Stay informed with The MBS News and Weekend Edition, an industry newsletter for leaders in the consumer-facing sector

Keep your finger on the pulse with a daily news bulletin delivered each morning, covering key stories and the latest people moves from all consumer-facing industries. And on Saturdays, delve into a thought-provoking article in our Weekend Edition, featuring interviews with leaders shaping their industry, and in-depth analysis of markets, trends and exciting new concepts.

Scan the QR code to sign up now:

Certified B Corporation

The MBS Group is committed to accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement.

About CEW UK

CEW UK is part of an international professional membership organisation of over 10,500 individual members who represent a cross-section of beauty and related businesses. CEW's primary purpose is to provide programmes to develop the careers and businesses in, and knowledge of the beauty industry for all of its members and to recognise exceptional talent, achievement and innovations in the industry. CEW provides opportunities for its members to connect and gain industry knowledge through networking events, mentoring programmes, trend reports, industry newsletters, workshops and industry leader talks.

For more information, visit
www.cewuk.co.uk

The MBS Group

3 Primrose Mews
Off Sharpleshall Street
London, NW1 8YW

+44 (0) 20 7722 1221
info@thembsgroup.co.uk

www.thembsgroup.co.uk