

Drapers



GENERATION

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



Technology drives the next generation of rising stars



— *Ana Santi*

Such was the calibre of this year's 30 under 30 shortlist that we could have called it the 50 under 30, but that didn't quite have the right ring to it. What this shows, of course, is that our industry is filled with talented young people under the age of 30, keen to make that next leap in their careers. As well as the traditional roles of buyers and merchandisers, Drapers Next Generation initiative has welcomed a lot more people in digital roles this year to the list, from content producers and multichannel editors, to digital designers and account executives, highlighting how technology continues to drive growth and innovation in fashion.

For 2013, Drapers Next Generation will nurture the careers of our 30 under 30 candidates even further by hosting a special dinner later this month so that all 30 can network and discuss their career plans. Then, on March 21, we will have our annual Next Generation Academy, where fashion's future stars will listen to the wise words of our leading lights in a one-day conference. For details on how to take part, visit the *Drapers* website, Facebook and Twitter pages – #DRNEXTGEN. Until then, why not turn to page 26 to learn how one of fashion's biggest names – John Lewis' Peter Ruis – got to where he is today.

Drapers deputy editor / ana.santi@emap.com



STEPHEN SELBY
Managing Director,
Success
Appointments

Now in its fourth year, we are proud to be the founder sponsor of what is now this major industry event. Next Generation is one of the important events of the year because it is all about the future of fashion, within this massive UK industry. Our enthusiasm grows not only because of how much larger the event is getting each year but also because of the talent of the young delegates, and the quality of the speakers. The success of events like this is directly linked to the country's economic future.

Last year I wrote about the potential growth of our manufacturing base, as

costs rise in China and India, and as lead times need to shorten. We have seen the start of a resurgence in UK manufacturing reported in the media, and also in the type of roles that we are increasingly being asked to recruit for.

Obviously, there is a long way to go before such growth makes any real difference in our balance of payments. The Government still needs to give incentives through tax and grants to encourage investment. Lastly, we need to see an increase in the number of young people learning technical skills to work in the manufacturing sector that we hope will emerge.

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Perfect fit:
Giffard enjoys working for Dorothy Perkins



LIAM GIFFARD

Merchandiser,
Dorothy Perkins,
aged 29

When your boss says you are seen as “successional” to her job, then you know you have a bright future ahead of you. And that is just how Liz Imam, head of merchandising at Dorothy Perkins, describes Liam Giffard.

A Manchester Metropolitan University Business School Retail Marketing graduate, Giffard realised his passion for merchandising early on and joined Arcadia-owned Dorothy Perkins as merchandising admin assistant in June 2006. He describes the past six years at the high street retailer as “extremely enjoyable”. He adds: “It was clear from the start that the brand was a perfect fit for me and I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to work for some great people who have helped me achieve the goals I set myself.”

Today, he is merchandiser for denim and casual bottoms. Overseeing one of the biggest areas of the brand, he has achieved a lot in the role. “Without question increasing our market share on denim has been my biggest achievement so far. We have just delivered a record 12 months for the brand and have planned further growth for the year ahead.” Imam praises Giffard as “home-grown talent” with a “proven track-record”, and says he “continually works successfully with his buying counterpart to develop his department and identify ways to drive the business”.

Giffard describes his next step as becoming head of merchandising, but says his “ultimate goal is to be merchandise director of a leading fashion retailer.”



KATY BROWN

Multichannel content editor,
Oasis, aged 28

When womenswear chain Oasis unveiled its Shadow Board comprised of eight of its next generation of talent earlier this year, it came as little surprise that its multichannel content editor Katy Brown made the cut.

With six years’ experience in fashion marketing both on and offline, Brown has worked her way up from web editing at Kerrang! Radio to marketing roles at Selfridges, Principles and Harvey Nichols before joining Oasis as web content editor in 2011. She is also a well-known blogger with her site From Primark to Prada.

With her background across online and marketing Brown understands the needs of the multichannel consumer, and since joining the business has had a real impact on Oasis’ level of customer engagement across social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.

“I am really proud of driving our social presence and bringing the key brand values to life in our online touch points. I want to continue to develop my career by managing dynamic and shareable content that builds brand advocacy at a more senior level in fashion,” says Brown.

Hash Ladha, deputy managing director at Oasis, says: “From the moment I met Katy I knew she was destined for great things. She’s bright, insightful and adds so much intelligent thinking to our day-to-day work. No doubt she will be interviewing me for a job someday.”

Brown is keen to broaden her business understanding. “I have been lucky enough to shadow [Oasis managing director] Liz Evans as part of the new Shadow Board initiative. I want to absorb as much as I can in terms of having a clearer view of the retail business across departments and functions as I develop my skills and experiences further.”

**The future’s bright:
Giffard’s goal
is to become a
merchandise director**





MARIA BURNS

Digital account executive NSW, Nike, aged 28

When *Drapers* catches up with Maria Burns she's just been snapped by global sportswear giant Nike, and is days away from starting in her new role as digital account executive. She says receiving the call from Nike out of the blue was a "pretty special day", and that she plans to hone her digital skills at the company.

With a family history in fashion – both her father and brothers worked in the "rag trade" – Burns has a solid track record with six years' experience in sales and account management. She graduated from the University of Birmingham with a BA joint honours in French and History of Art in 2006. She

says the move towards a non-fashion subject was a "conscious decision" in order to make her a more well-rounded candidate, and one that she conscientiously supplemented by undertaking short courses in fashion at Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design and by interning at fashion houses during the holidays.

She then began her career in June 2006 at fashion agent Macandi, before joining Fred Perry as a key account manager in 2008, then stepping up to the role of UK and international Laurel Wreath account manager in 2010.

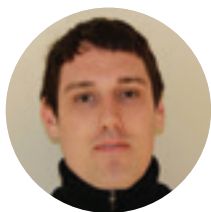
How her new role will pan out remains to be seen, but she has no regrets about her chosen career path. "On a broad note, I love my job as each day can be different. Working in seasons means there is always something new and exciting to work with. I love the cyclical nature of it," she says.

Speaking about her new role she adds: "From what I've seen of [Nike] and my new colleagues so far, it seems like a fast moving, innovative and fun company – I can't wait to start. I'm excited about working for one of the biggest brands in the world."



A giant leap: Burns is excited about her move to Nike

'Working in seasons means that there is always something new and exciting to work with'



TOM CAHALAN

Managing director, Lost Ferret, aged 26

"It just seemed like a good idea at the time," Tom Cahalan says matter-of-factly, describing the reason why he decided to set up his own business at just 18. "I'd been coding since I was 15. How hard can it be to get a business going? Well, the answer is really hard."

Cahalan says his big break came when Lost Ferret, his ecommerce solutions provider, secured Quiz Clothing as a customer in 2009. From there, Lost Ferret started working with Cecil Gee, Moss Bros and The Officers Club among others, with more recent clients including Oki-ni and Fuse Fashion. Not bad for a 26 year old.

"Winning Moss Bros, when we were a tiny company with only a few staff, was a great achievement," Cahalan remembers.

"However, we've helped some customers in three years to increase their sales tenfold, which is what I'm most proud of."

Cahalan says he's got to where he is today with "a lot of hard work, long hours, no social life and great staff". And his biggest lesson so far? "Find your niche. Once you're completely aware of what you want to be doing, don't try and do anything else; just do what you're doing the best you can," he says. "Simplicity is king. Stick to one thing and do it well and everyone benefits."

Cahalan's ambition is to help some of the best-known fashion retailers across the UK to grow by "offering fantastic support, a quick turnaround and an easy to use content management system".



ALICE ELLIOTT

Event manager, Jacket Required, aged 26

Alice Elliott's foray into fashion came after a chance meeting with Storm Model Management founder Sarah Doukas, "who just happened to be my friend's godmother", says Elliott, after 'crashing' a lunch between the friend, his mother and Doukas. "Sarah invited me to do a placement at Storm to help me get a better understanding of what career I might be interested in. I couldn't be more grateful for the opportunity," she explains.

After the placement she landed a job at lingerie brand By Caprice. "I enjoyed being in a fast-paced environment. Working in a small company meant I was involved in all aspects, from marketing and PR to brand strategy and sales."

But it's at Jacket Required that Elliott feels at home, claiming it as her biggest achievement so far. "I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to work alongside two of the most knowledgeable gents in the menswear industry: [Jacket Required founders] Mark Batista and Craig Ford."

The feeling is mutual. "Alice can spot a decent menswear brand from a mile off and recognises all of the qualities, subtleties and what is necessary in a collection that make it suitable for the show," says Batista. "She has bought in brands like A Kind Of Guise, Canada Goose, Elka and Hartford all off her own bat and is constantly presenting us with new brands."



Quest for quality: Jacket Required's Batista says Elliott can spot a decent menswear brand from a mile off



LAURA GALLIGAN

Creative producer, Asos, aged 28

"Asos is so fast paced; I think we forget how much we do in a month, let alone a year," says Laura Galligan, when asked to list some of her achievements so far. "Our Australia campaign over in New York last summer was a real highlight; getting to work with amazing photographers on some of our collaborations such as the Asos Black x Puma campaign is also amazing."

After studying a fashion, communication and marketing degree at Leeds University, where she had a year in industry working in Monsoon's design team, Galligan went on to work in PR and event management before joining Asos in February 2010 as a creative assistant. The thing about Galligan is that she keeps a clear head. "One of the main things that I have learned is that some things are out of your control, and if something doesn't go to plan, it isn't the end of the world, there is always a plan B," she says.

Ian Wright, fashion director at *Drapers* and former Asos menswear editor, agrees. "Considering these home page images are the shop windows for one of Britain's biggest fashion retailers, the importance of Laura's input cannot be underestimated."



Plan A: Asos' spring 13 menswear collection



TOM FLANNERY

Product development for Laurel Wreath and special projects, Fred Perry, aged 26

"Tom is one to watch. Laurel Wreath at Fred Perry really couldn't manage without him" says Claire Barrett, Tom Flannery's line manager and product manager of Laurel Wreath (men's, accessories and special projects).

Flannery graduated with a degree in quantity surveying, but decided to pursue a career in fashion, and upped sticks to the French Alps to indulge in his passion for freestyle skiing while sending out applications. "Eventually Jaeger took a punt on me and I immediately hung up my skis and moved back to the UK," says Flannery.

Originally starting as a womenswear fabric assistant he was promoted to men's fabric buyer after just four months. He then joined Fred Perry in July 2012.

Barrett is full of praise for Flannery. "He has worked on some exciting and high-profile blank canvas projects and his hard work will be evident in some projects we are due to release this year. In case this makes Tom sound like all work and no fun, it's worth pointing out that his sense of humour keeps us all going through some busy days, making him as popular in the pub as he is in the office."

Flannery is ambitious for the future. "I would like to continue to progress within the company and ultimately become a product director for a young fashion brand."



LAURA GILBERT

Assistant womenswear buyer, Coggles, aged 27

It's easy to see why Coggles chief executive and creative director Mark Bage believes Laura Gilbert will go far. She might have only been with the business for 18 months, but her buying values are so aligned to Coggles' that they appear inherent.

"Adam Jagger, my manager and buying director, is my mentor," says Gilbert. "He has taught me to go with my gut when making decisions. Coggles takes a different approach to the retail industry in general and we haven't managed to get to this position by following the crowd. This is one of my favourite parts of the job; being given a relatively free reign when making decisions means I can be creative."

Gilbert found herself at Coggles after working as a merchandise admin assistant at Miss Selfridge, then as a sales analyst at Ralph Lauren, when she realised that she "missed being around product". "When I started at Coggles, I had no industry contacts, and had to learn all elements of the role pretty quickly. I now manage all of my own accounts. I started out with a narrow understanding of how to make a selection, and have now learned to combine the interests of our customers into each buy."

In 18 months, Gilbert has certainly impressed Bage, who says of her: "Laura has all the attributes of becoming an excellent buyer, she has great analytical skills and a keen buying eye." This bodes well for Gilbert's ambition to head up the buying team at Coggles. "Adam, watch out!" she jokes.



Pride in product: Gilbert wants to head up Coggles' buying team



Style savvy: Harvey designs men's tailoring and formalwear for Reiss



THOMAS HARVEY

Senior menswear designer, Reiss, aged 29

For Thomas Harvey fashion was always going to be his natural route. "From an early age my Nan, a fashionable seamstress, instilled in me an understanding of, and appreciation for, quality craftsmanship," he says. Further inspired by 60s style icons such as actors Terence Stamp and Steve McQueen, he says that he was "compelled to tap into the illustrious world of fashion".

While studying a BA hons in fashion design at Kingston University he worked as an apprentice under Douglas Hayward at his eponymous Mount Street tailors. Upon graduation he moved to New York, where he worked with designer Marc Jacobs, who he calls "the master of commercial fashion", interning for Marc by Marc. While

there he also worked for smaller cult labels such as Duckie Brown and Patrik Ervell, before returning to the UK in 2007 to take up the role of menswear designer at Aquascutum, quickly progressing to senior menswear designer, where he designed the English heritage brand's mainline collection for three years. He was then headhunted by premium retailer Reiss to design the men's tailoring and formalwear.

"I love working for a brand that makes style accessible, giving men confidence in their everyday lives. [Reiss founder] David Reiss pioneered the ever-important middle market and I continue to learn from his ability to deliver a quality product at an affordable price. With an increasingly savvy, value-conscious consumer market, it's the middle market that most interests me."



Reiss spring 13 mainline (right and top)



OLIVIA HEWITT

Design assistant, River Island, aged 24

When an established designer like Ben de Lisi says he expects to hear more from you, you know you're on the right track. He was commenting on Olivia Hewitt's six-piece collection for her final year studying BA Fashion hons at Manchester Metropolitan University, which combined vibrant prints with hand embroidery. Debenhams teamed up with Manchester Metropolitan University to search for new talent. The collection was a hit with the department store, which displayed the range in its windows, and led to high street favourite River Island talent spotting her at Graduate Fashion Week (GFW) in 2011.

Miranda Kirwan, womenswear design controller at River Island, says: "We discovered Olivia at GFW and thought her final collection was a great fit for River Island. We had a chat and offered her a work placement for three months within the design team." Impressing during her internship it quickly turned into a permanent job. "Olivia has been part of the team for just over a year and she is a valued member of the dresses department."

Olivia wants to expand into other areas at River Island, such as leather and tailoring. She adds: "I love designing and my goal is to have my own label of luxurious womenswear."

New talent:
River Island's
autumn 12
Eastern Baroque
collection



AHMED KHAN

Moss Bespoke store manager, Moss Bros, aged 22

When Ahmed Khan found his route into fashion – by chance while studying law at college, he admits – it was the best move he ever made. On graduating from the Fashion and Retail Academy (FRA) with a Level 3 Diploma in Fashion Retail in 2008 he won the Tesco Award for Outstanding Student. He says: "Sharing the stage with Sir Philip Green, Sir Stuart Rose, Terry Green and Lord Wolfson was a highlight."

His early potential didn't go unnoticed by FRA principal Karen Dennison. "In retail operations lessons his talent was clear from the start, always applying commercial thinking to help solve problems and improve processes."

Dennison adds that he is the "perfect candidate for people management".

Khan has worked his way up from the shopfloor, starting as a sales associate at Savile Row men's tailor Gieves & Hawkes, then joining men's formalwear retailer Moss Bros as a supervisor in 2010. He started his current position as Moss Bros' youngest store manager in June 2012.

Now also in his final year as a Fashion Business student at the London College of Fashion, Khan puts his success down to hard work, determination, and sacrifice. He cites multi-site management, project management, and working in a retail operations capacity as ambitions. "My ultimate career goal is to create my own menswear brand once I have gained enough experience and capital. I would like to end my career either being a business consultant or teaching at somewhere like the FRA." ▶



TIM KALIC

Head of digital, Pretty Green, aged 30

Since he was 16, Tim Kalic's world has been a digital one. "That's when I first connected to the internet; in those days it was using a 28K dial-up modem," he says. After graduating with a first-class honours degree in interactive media production from Bournemouth University, Kalic was employed by the university in a Centre for Excellence, working on projects for the BBC and Reuters. "By then I knew that my passion lay in ecommerce and happily accepted a job offer from a dynamic digital media agency called Chillifish. We worked predominately on luxury boutique ecommerce brands," says Kalic.

It was at Chillifish that Kalic met the team at Pretty Green. "I fell in love with the brand and concept. A year later, I joined Pretty Green as head of digital," he says. "My biggest achievement is being at the forefront of the rapid



Pretty Green: Kalic built the online brand from a logo

growth of Pretty Green, building the brand online from a logo and idea to an incredibly successful business. Ecommerce is an integral part of the Pretty Green business and, from that perspective, I have been fortunate enough to be actively involved in most aspects of the business.

But he wants more. "Ecommerce is still in its early stages. I want to make a fundamental difference in how people buy online," says Kalic.

Nigel Grant, brand director at Pretty Green, says: "Tim's a visionary; he sees the wider picture, he doesn't just operate in his skillset."



SIOBHAN KING

Senior brand manager, New Look, aged 30

When Siobhan King's line manager Amy Thom said her protégé "more than kept up with the fast pace required of the role", she was arguably putting it mildly. King's infectious drive, ambition and passion for New Look has translated into some notable achievements, likely to make others at a similar level feel somewhat lazy.

Since being promoted in June 2012, King has campaigned successfully for New Look to adopt augmented reality app Blippar in a bid to launch an interactive high street fashion magazine, thus giving customers the opportunity to virtually try on product. "Siobhan has already made a huge impact, spearheading new technology initiatives and owning the new brand articulation and how we engage the entire business so that we are all living and breathing the New Look brand," says Thom.

King has set up working groups for senior management across all areas of the business to meet monthly and share ideas on best practice and threats and opportunities to the business. "I have the ability to bring people together and inspire others including the most senior directors," says King.



New Look's Christmas campaign



NICK LEHRAIN

Digital designer, Warehouse, aged 29

For Warehouse digital designer Nick Lehrain, the aesthetic is everything. "I've always loved working with images. It sometimes feels as if design chose me. Whether I'm planning an interactive feature for the website or creating eye-catching trade messages, I'm happiest behind my Mac," he says.

Lehrain has more than 11 years' experience in design. Prior to joining Warehouse in December 2011 he spent seven years as a freelance designer, and before that he was a graphic/web designer and photographic assistant at photography and design firm Amberroom.

He says his varied experience helps him approach design briefs in a different way at Warehouse. "I've produced some of my best work at Warehouse and I am proud of our new website - which was redesigned from top to bottom last summer. It's a mammoth ecommerce website and every detail from its aesthetics to its usability

was considered. The response has been fantastic."

He adds: "I love designing across channels, making sure our mobile app fits with our website or that our home page reflects what's going on in store. Thinking about the bigger picture really interests me and I think this is where my future lies."

His line manager Fiona Harrison, head of ecommerce at Warehouse, certainly seems to agree. "Digital designers like Nick don't come along every day. His infectious passion alone is inspiring. He is highly creative, has strong technical skills and considers the user journey across all channels."

She adds: "Nick is incredibly talented yet is humble too. Whatever the weather, he comes to work on his scooter and always wears quirky socks. Perhaps it's this innate connection with the world that manifests itself in his work and makes it feel so authentic."



JOHN KISZELY

Fashion sales manager UK and Ireland, J. Lindeberg, aged 27

There's a reason why John Kiszely is tipped to go far by industry experts: his love and understanding of product. "John is passionate and knowledgeable about the J. Lindeberg product," says Steve Cochrane, managing director of Psyche, which stocks the brand. "He goes out of his way to help retailers achieve sell-through with stock swaps."

Kara Heward, recruitment consultant at CVUK, agrees. "John has a real hands-on approach, ensuring he visits every customer. He is not just 'selling' a collection, but building relationships and cementing J. Lindeberg's brand DNA."

Kiszely began his career on the shopfloor, working as a sales associate at Selfridges' Birmingham in 2008. In less than two years, he was promoted to contemporary brand specialist, before making the leap to J. Lindeberg. Kiszely's break into management came when he was asked to take responsibility for the UK and Ireland in the absence of a country manager. "Creating and rolling out the new shop-in-shop concept across the UK for independent stores was one of my biggest achievements," says Kiszely. "I'd like to build on my UK wholesale experience and to work with the best stores internationally."



KAT MACONIE

Owner, Kat Maconie, aged 28

After two years at Whistles, working on buying and product development, Kat Maconie moved into fashion recruitment and began creating her label part time during her holidays. Once her stockist count reached 25, Maconie went full time.

Her success is largely down to her attention to detail. "Quality control everything before it leaves the factory," she advises. "In my first season 1,000 pairs [of shoes] got shipped faulty and I had to get them all remade in under two weeks to meet delivery dates. I have now moved factory and work with a team of excellent quality controllers."

Making a profit in 2012 and accompanying David Cameron on a trade delegation to Brazil last October have been Maconie's biggest achievements. "My mentor is [former Ben Sherman managing director] Stephen Gill," she says, now a director at Kat Maconie. "He introduced me to a network of excellent distributors, agents and suppliers and has guided my business into a profitable one. Richard Kottler and Nicholas Perry Billing at the British Footwear Association and Barbara Wilson who heads the fashion division at UKTI are always on the phone to offer advice.

The best advice I was given was from luxury fashion consultant David Jones: 'Turnover is vanity, profit is sanity'."



Big achievement: McKeever worked on the launch of two Coast flagships



EMMA MCKEEVER

Marketing manager, Coast, aged 28

With seven years' experience in fashion marketing under her belt, this year Emma McKeever stepped up to the role of marketing manager at Coast. Marketing and ecommerce director Jayne O'Keeffe describes McKeever as "a real asset to our brand" and forecasts "a very bright future ahead of her". She adds: "The past year has seen her take on increased levels of responsibility and she rose to the challenge admirably. She is dedicated and highly committed to her work and is not afraid to try new approaches."

McKeever graduated in 2005 with a BA honours in advertising and marketing

communications from Bournemouth University. When a marketing assistant role at Warehouse came up she says she "grabbed it with both hands".

She joined Austin Reed as a marketing executive in 2006 but left after two years to become retail marketing co-ordinator at Coast in 2008, before being promoted to her current job.

Life at Coast is full on and fast paced, but McKeever wouldn't have it any other way. "Coast is a relatively small company so you can be involved in a lot of things and I get to work with different people from all over the business."

In 2012, McKeever worked on the marketing for the launch of Coast's two new flagships - Oxford Street and the Trafford Centre in Manchester - which she describes as two of her biggest achievements. "It was an opportunity to create and deliver a new identity for the brand that showcased the new Coast flagship experience," she says.

McKeever aims to become brand director for an international business.



DARREN MCKOY

EMEA footwear product manager, Onitsuka Tiger and Asics, aged 29

Darren McKoy, EMEA footwear product manager at footwear brand Onitsuka Tiger and Asics realised his knack for product while working on the shopfloor, but jokes his love for retail is mainly driven by his "fetish" for spending money on sneakers and football boots.

After graduating with a retail marketing management BA honours from Leeds Metropolitan University in 2005, he went to work for menswear independent Hip Store in Leeds, before joining Sports Direct as a trainee buyer in November

2005, and then kidswear brand Mamas & Papas in 2006 as product manager for clothing, toys and gifts.

He joined sportswear giant Adidas as global product manager for Adidas Originals in 2008, after undergoing a "rigorous" one-week assessment in Germany at Adidas' global headquarters in Herzogenaurach for the one-year Global Future Product Manager Trainee Programme.

He credits the experience at Adidas for propelling him into subsequent roles as product

manager EMEA at outdoor brand North Face in 2010, and into his current role as of February 2012.

Darren Campbell, lifestyle director at Onitsuka Tiger, says McKoy made an "outstanding" contribution to the business in 2012. "His previous roles at Adidas and North Face have given him the disciplines to drive product creation. What Onitsuka Tiger now sees is a strong leader come through."

He adds that McKoy has "the right level of hunger to progress through the organisation".



KATIE MCNAMARA

Social media and content marketing executive, Very.co.uk, aged 27

After graduating with a BA honours in Journalism from Edge Hill College of Higher Education in Ormskirk, Katie McNamara knew she wanted to work in online fashion retail. In 2006, she joined Marks & Spencer as a web content editor, leaving after just five months to join digital firm New Mind in 2006.

Today, McNamara is responsible for the day-to-day development and management of social media and content for Very.co.uk. Philippa Heywood, the brand's head of marketing, says she "delivers a highly engaging social media strategy through an exceptional understanding of the interests and passions of our customers. Her preparedness to innovate and active listening to both customers and competitors set her apart from her peers".

Some of her highlights in 2012 include delivering a successful Google+ hangout with brand ambassador Fearné Cotton, and managing social media activity around Very.co.uk's fashion partnership with V Festival.

McNamara says "online is her absolute passion" and that she sees her career progressing in digital. "Whether it's editorial content, ecommerce content or a blend of the two, I want to be a key player in engaging with consumers across all digital touchpoints."



RICKY MOAKES

Colour and materials designer - sport casual, Lacoste Footwear at Pentland Brands, aged 23

Nominated for the Gold Award at Graduate Fashion Week in 2011, and graduating with a first-class BA honours in Fashion Studies from The Arts University College Bournemouth, Moakes was snapped up by Pentland Brands to join its Lacoste Footwear team in 2011 as a colour and materials designer.

Since taking up the role, Moakes has worked on the spring 13 launch of Sport Casual. "When I got the offer for my first-ever job at Lacoste Footwear it made all the hard work worthwhile. And working from the beginning of Sport Casual and recently seeing it finally reach stores is the biggest achievement to date," says Moakes.

Carl Wilkinson, category design manager - Lacoste Footwear at Pentland Brands, says he is one to watch. "From the moment he arrived his enthusiasm for learning the business was apparent and he already possesses a firm grasp on theme building, colour blocking and material balance. Although still a raw talent, his creative flair brings an edge to his idea generation."

Moakes aims to become a footwear designer, with a goal to work as a designer for a luxury brand within 10 years.

'Although still a raw talent, Moakes' creative flair brings an edge to his idea generation'



LEANNE ODDY

International junior merchandiser (Evans), Arcadia Group, aged 28

With a proven track record and about eight years' worth of experience in merchandising, Leanne Oddy was promoted to junior merchandiser at Evans in August 2012. Responsible for the development and implementation of all of Evans' international franchise markets in the Middle East, Europe and North America, Oddy has also set up new wholesale deals across markets such as New Zealand, France and the US, and manages the concessions business to make sure they integrate fully with the UK stores.

Oddy's performance in the role has impressed her manager, Adele Shara,

holding merch[andise] manager at Evans, Arcadia Group. She says: "Leanne has driven the international team to deliver five seasons of positive like-for-like [growth]. In the last year Leanne has set up and traded four new wholesale deals, creating new processes where there were none before."

Shara adds: "She has raised the profile of international across the floor to ensure we are a multichannel business."

Oddy previously completed two work placements in Arcadia's international department during her BA honours in Fashion Merchandise Management at the University of Westminster in London, which she graduated from with a first-class degree. When the then merchandise manager for international gave her a call in 2007 for an interview she was quite firm and said she would only return as an assistant merchandiser. "It worked out in the long run," she says.

Oddy says she wants to remain in international. "I definitely want to be involved in international business development and would potentially like to work abroad again at some point in the future."



HEATHER PHILIP

Menswear merchandiser, Matalan, aged 27

Heather Philip knew what she wanted to do from the age of 16. “I started working as a retail Christmas temp and from that moment I knew I was destined for a retail career,” she says. After completing her BA in Accountancy, Philip bagged her first head office role at the age of 20, working as an allocator for Internazionale in Glasgow.

Within a year, she was promoted to assistant merchandiser, and a position as assistant merchandiser for Matalan in Liverpool soon followed. “This move was my biggest challenge as a new role and new city but eager to learn, I quickly adapted and moved forward. After two years I was given the opportunity to run my own department and was promoted to merchandiser. It helped confirm that the hard work will pay off and that if you really prove yourself you will be successful.”

Philip has impressed Victoria Leitch, menswear merchandise controller at Matalan, with her “can-do” attitude. “Heather has natural drive and ambition that means she stands out in a group. She has the ability to clearly communicate to all levels of the business and is respected by everyone that comes into contact with her. Heather’s creative problem solving and understanding of the customer has driven her team and a great sales performance.”

Philip has a sensible, but driven, head on her young shoulders. “Don’t get demotivated by others,” Philip advises. “It’s easy to compare yourself to how fast others are moving and what other people are doing but if you focus on what you are doing and set yourself goals it’ll show in your results.”



Made in Britain: Johnstons of Elgin autumn 12 collection



OLIVER PLATTS

Sales director, Johnstons of Elgin, aged 30

Leadership; communication skills; empathy with product, market and customer; understanding the retail and consumer market; solid; dependable; a team player. Oliver Platts “fits all this criteria impeccably”, says Johnstons of Elgin managing director James Dracup. “Oliver is blessed in that he had a comprehensive experience as a retail operations and buying manager with his previous career at The House of Bruar. He fully understands, therefore, the needs and requirements of our customers.”

Having led a team of 150 as retail manager at The House of Bruar before joining Johnstons of Elgin, Platts is as passionate about sales as he is about British products. “Our chairman James Sugden knows everything there is to know about the industry and I also share his fierce passion for British-made goods,” says Platts. “He always tells me to make sure I put quality first, from the product we sell, to the phone calls I make and emails I send, quality of everything is key.”

It’s not surprising, then, that Platts admires fashion’s British stalwarts: Paul Smith, Vivienne Westwood, Christopher Bailey. “Also Nick Robertson at Asos for changing the face of modern fashion retailing,” says Platts.

Platts’ ambitions remain firmly rooted in British manufacturing. “[My ambition is] to be a major part of Johnstons of Elgin on a global stage and at the forefront of a resurgence in British textile manufacturing by [helping] to develop great UK-made products for the whole world to buy.”



All for one: Matalan autumn 12 blue snowflake onesie (left) and striped hooded onesie (right)



LIAM PRICE

Ecommerce merchandiser, Warehouse, aged 23

Liam Price only joined Warehouse in October last year, but has already made “a really big impact”, says trading director Laura Boyd. “He is very passionate about what he does and works exceptionally hard to deliver positive results,” she says. “This combined with a genuine talent for merchandising and an understanding of ever-changing consumer behaviours in the online world, means he is a great asset to the brand.”

Price graduated from the Fashion Retail Academy (FRA) in 2007 with a Diploma in Fashion Retail Management, and won the Arcadia Award for Most Outstanding Student; handed to him by Sir Philip Green. John Lewis spotted him before he’d even completed his studies and accepted him onto the John Lewis Management Development Programme prior to graduation. “FRA is not at all surprised that he is doing so well and just 5 and a half years after his graduation he is on this list,” says FRA Principal Karen Dennison.

He joined Dorothy Perkins as an assistant merchandiser in 2009, and went to New Look as a junior merchandiser in May 2011, where he worked as part of the newly created [external] brands function, integrating more than 150 brands onto the website.

Looking ahead, Price says: “Ultimately, I see myself developing to a head of department role within the Aurora group.”



PAUL RADVILLE

Account manager fashion, Puma Lifestyle, aged 29

With eight years’ experience in wholesale sales and account management, Paul Radville is responsible for sportswear brand Puma’s UK independent business for its top fashion tier, which represents more than 60 accounts and 100-plus doors.

It’s a role he has made a success of since joining Puma in January 2011. Looking after accounts such as London indie Browns, fashion indie Hervia Bazaar in Manchester, Northeast mini chain Van Mildert and designer mini-chain Cruise, he has also overseen Northwest account Tessuti in going from a single

The Joust Mid autumn 12 Alexander McQueen Puma collection



door account into a top mini chain and its subsequent integration into the JD Group. Since starting he has grown his business by 50% and successfully acquired high-profile indie accounts including Philip Browne in Norwich, and Brighton-based indie Profile. Spring 13 is also up 15% year on year with strong projected sales for autumn 13.

Radville worked his way up from the shopfloor at Marks & Spencer, joining kidswear licensee CWF in 2004 as a visual merchandiser and staff trainer, before switching to become regional wholesale manager in 2006. He later joined young fashion brand Elvis Jesus as regional sales manager for the South in 2009, before migrating across to Puma.

Rowland Davies, fashion sales manager at Puma, says nothing phases Radville in pursuit of a sale. “When we employed him I knew I had someone who at 5pm on a cold afternoon wouldn’t be thinking about getting home, but whether he could reach a potential door in the next town before it shuts.”

He adds: “The next step for him should be to take on some of our rapidly expanding department store business, which will prepare him to make that move up to key account management in the not too distant future.”



KIEFER RAMIRO

Customer advisor and buyer, Number Six, aged 22

Two years into his career in fashion and Kiefer Ramiro is learning the ropes first hand from Mark Batista, owner of fashion retailer Number Six and founder of London menswear trade show Jacket Required. However, it was as customer advisor at young fashion independent Attic Clothing in Aberdeen two years ago that he really cut his teeth. He admits that “pre-2010 I was oblivious to things like selvedge denim”.

Providing great customer service and having a snappy dress sense have helped him get ahead. “There’s a saying that I put into action: ‘Dress for the position you want, not the one you have.’ Thankfully, my previous manager did notice this and recommended me for the position I currently have at Number Six.”

He describes the move from Aberdeen to London in April 2012 as the biggest of his career, putting him “in the thick of it”. Upon arrival he attended a six-week short course at the London College of Fashion on buying and merchandising.

Ramiro has clear aspirations for the future. “Once I have achieved proven sell-through with the buying, I may look more into coming off the shopfloor and further my career elsewhere within the industry.”



Winter wonders: Rosie Sugden's fluoro autumn 2012 range



KELLY TOLMAN

Womenswear buyer, Very.co.uk, aged 25

Womenswear buyer Kelly Tolman is described as one of the rising stars of Very.co.uk's buying team. She began her fashion career at sportswear giant JD Sports, before leaving to join Shop Direct Group, the parent company of Very.co.uk, as children's branded clothing assistant buyer in January 2010.

Since then she has quickly worked her way through the ranks to become a womenswear buyer, covering both high street and contemporary brands, including the likes of Superdry, Miss Sixty, Lipsy and Little Mistress. Head of womenswear buying Julie Donnelly says she is "highly self-motivated and driven with strong observational skills and a sound commercial trading ability".

Tolman says becoming a fashion buyer was a childhood ambition. "I come from a family that has achieved real success in fashion retail. With a brother who works in footwear, an uncle who is a proprietor of an independent sports fashion store, a father who works in brand development and wholesale and a grandfather who was a merchandiser, I have always been surrounded by industry specialists. From an early age, this provoked a natural interest in fashion and encouraged me to have an eye on the high street and emerging trends."

Tolman hopes to develop her career at Shop Direct Group, which also counts brands Littlewoods and Isme among its portfolio. She says: "My passion lies within ladies footwear and apparel and I want to be recognised as a specialist in one or both of these areas within the business and the wider retail industry. I aim to progress to an influential, respected senior buyer within the next few years and consequently gain a position as a head of buying in the future."



ROSIE SUGDEN

Director, Rosie Sugden Scottish Cashmere, aged 25

Flying the flag for British manufacturing, Rosie Sugden was born into textiles. "Both my parents' families come from a textile background. My father [James Sugden, director at Johnstons of Elgin] in particular has always worked in textiles and when I was little he used to pick me up from school and take me round the factory with him. I loved the smell of the dye house, the noise in the weaving shed and seeing all the raw fibre - cashmere or wool - going through the processes (carding, dyeing, spinning,



weaving) and coming out at the end as a beautiful woven rug, or knitted jumper," Sugden reminisces.

After achieving a first-class honours degree in Fashion Design, Knitwear at Northumbria University, Sugden interned for designer Christopher Kane and worked as a sales assistant for cashmere clothing retailer Brora, before launching her own accessories label in 2011. "I do not believe that it is necessary, as so many companies these days do, to outsource to Far East factories in order to make margins, particularly when I have such highly skilled artisans and machine technologies available right here on my doorstep in the Borders."

In just over a year, Sugden boasts stockists including Matches, Liberty and premium indie Black White Denim.

Her father is both Sugden's mentor and the person she most admires in the industry. "I think the best piece of advice he has given me and instilled in me is to work really, really hard if you want to achieve something and to never give up. I think Julie Deane [founder of The Cambridge Satchel Company] is also very inspirational."

Scottish power: hand-knitted tartan



'Work really, really hard if you want to achieve something and never give up'



Strength to strength: Tucker developed her skills at Base London



OLIVIA TUCKER

Merchandising assistant, Base London, aged 22

So impressed was Base London merchandising manager Jolene Lay with Olivia Tucker that she offered the 22 year-old a full-time job before the competition could even learn about Tucker. In 2012, Tucker completed a year's placement with Base London as part of her London College of Fashion course on Fashion Management, and Lay snapped her up... for May 2013.

"Taking over full responsibility for all allocation within three months, Liddy showed a natural understanding of our many markets and their demands,

Part of Base London's spring 13 collection



helping us to maximise sales and stock turn," says Lay. "During her time with us she progressed to sample control for over 10 countries and was instrumental in range planning meetings. Liddy has proved to be a true talent."

It's no wonder Tucker ended up in fashion; she seemed destined for it from day one. "My mother was assistant to Mary Quant in the 1980s, and I was brought up surrounded by the famous daisy logo and strongly influenced by her approach to fashion," she says. "What I admire most about Mary Quant is not just her forward thinking fashion designs, but the way in which she transformed her name into one of the first global brands through unique distribution networks and collaborations."

Tucker then found work experience at Osprey London, with menswear designer Katie Eary and A&R Photographic and Stylist agency as a production assistant. "But it was during my placement year at Base London that I think I truly found where my strengths lie. I've been able to apply my theoretical knowledge and have been given the support to constantly develop my skills," says Tucker.



JACK WILKINSON

Merchandiser, Internacionale, aged 28

Just three years since Jack Wilkinson decided to swap a career in teaching for one in fashion he has enjoyed a meteoric rise through the ranks. A biotechnology graduate from the University of Northumbria he started out in merchandising aged 24, after deciding he wanted a more analytical, numbers-based role.

He began with a three-month trainee merchandiser contract with French Connection before leaving to become an allocator at River Island in 2008. He was promoted to senior allocator after just nine months, and then to assistant merchandiser in January 2010.

He joined young fashion chain Internacionale as a junior merchandiser in January 2011, where he was again promoted to merchandiser after just 10 months. Today he manages a multi-million pound department within Internacionale, which he has driven forward over the past 20 months with the introduction of clothing concessions within the business.

Wilkinson's success doesn't come as any surprise to Mary Anderson-Ford, director of recruitment agency Bloom Retail. "I first met Jack when he was looking to become an allocator in 2008, and could spot instantly he was going to go far. I predict he'll have a head of merchandising title within three years. Watch him go," she says.

Wilkinson says: "I am now focusing on developing my merchandising skills with a view to working towards a senior merchandiser position, hopefully within Internacionale."



Future plans: Wilkinson hopes to reach a senior position



ANDY RUBIN
Chief executive,
Pentland Brands

I have done so many different things in our company and I wouldn't change a thing. In more than 21 years with our company I've designed shoes, checked production, created marketing campaigns, been on the road as a rep, found international partners and bought brands. I've loved every minute.

To those looking to progress into management my advice is to learn about every aspect of the business. Work harder than everyone else. Be inquisitive. Ask great questions. Love product. Love getting out into the market. Keep up with industry news and current affairs. Know the numbers. Stay humble. Know your strengths and support your weaknesses by hiring people better than you.

WORDS *of* wisdom

From mentors to wise words, fashion's leading lights share their best piece of advice

Compiled by **SUZANNE BEARNE**

'Work harder than everyone else. Be inquisitive. Ask great questions'

Andy Rubin, chief executive, Pentland Brands



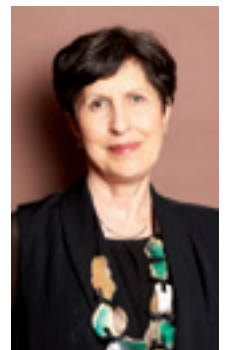
DERYANE TADD
Owner, The Dressing Room

Progressing in this industry is about giving it your all. Be prepared to do everyday tasks. On your way up, learn everything about the company. My mentor was Stuart Selwyn [former owner of five French Connection franchises]. I worked with him at French Connection for seven years and he gave me invaluable advice about running my own business. He told me to put my heart and soul into it and always treat people as you would want to be treated.



MATTHEW WILLIAMSON
Designer

Joseph Velosa, my co-founder and chief executive, said to me many, many years ago: "First of all you have to have a passion, confidence and such a clear vision for what you are doing. If you don't have that, then you have nothing really. If you don't believe in what you are doing, why would anyone else?" That has always stuck with me and I always try to go with instinct and work on things I personally love. If it feels genuine, the process then becomes easier and more enjoyable and I hope others can see that passion in the end product.



CAROLINE BURSTEIN
Creative director,
Browns

The best career advice I was given was "be aware, alert and alive" - advice given to me by my late father Sidney Burstein. I admire my mother's energy and enthusiasm and her love of fashion. I've always also admired [designer] Hussein Chalayan because I find him to be an artist that is always true to himself.

What advice would I give to those looking to progress up the career ladder? Don't lose faith in yourself.



JAMES EDEN

Owner, Cooper & Stollbrand and Private White VC

You need to be very determined and hardworking in this industry. My training came from the factory and here actions speak louder than words. To work and survive you need skill and flair, but you can't succeed without grit and determination. It's all about perseverance; don't take no for an answer.

Who do I admire? All the machinists. Some have worked in the factory for 50 years. They've dedicated their lives to a British factory. They're the perfect pin-ups for us all.



RUTH CHAPMAN

Co-founder, Matches

Tom [Chapman] and I consistently push ourselves and our team to innovate and be brave in all our decisions, which is at the core of our business. Generosity in how you treat everyone is also key. There is no substitute for hard work. Have a mature approach and set realistic expectations, focusing on short and long-term goals and constantly reassess how you are doing. Always ask people for constructive criticism and then action it rather than being defensive and taking it personally.



MARIGAY MCKEE

Chief merchant, Harrods

I've had several talented mentors over my 25 working years. My first and most important one was Leonard Lauder, chairman of The Estée Lauder Companies. He is one of the wisest, kindest people I've ever met in my entire life, a good man with a good heart, who lives by what he preaches and lives by what he stands for. His values are instilled and embedded in those close to him: "Honesty, determination, hard work, resilience and integrity in everything you do - always", and he's right.

MARK ASHTON

Owner, Concept Fashion

Knowledge is a great weapon but as each sector is forever changing it's vital to keep your knowledge up to date. Become an avid listener and listen more than you talk and more importantly listen to the people smarter than you. Help your boss and be accommodating, be a motivational force as he or she determines your future.

I always tell people not to hide, be bold and follow your gut. Sometimes the feeling is so strong that you have to take enormous risks. They will pay off if you know your stuff. Sound good, look good and look as if you care and present with passion and power. Most of all be positive and stand out through your energy and desire to innovate.



DAN LUMB

Ecommerce director, Reiss

Depending on how ambitious you are and what you are willing to sacrifice, there should be no limit to what you can achieve. Work-life balance is something I have always advocated: happy on the outside and you'll be happy on the inside (work that is).

To be the very best in ecommerce you need passion, common sense, an obsessive thirst for technology and newness, being able to adapt to change whether it be product or shopping habits. I feel the best way of doing this is working and learning from people or your mentors every day. Being self-aware, knowing what makes people tick and never taking yourself too seriously. After all it's only fashion.



SIMON BERWIN

Managing director, Berwin & Berwin

The fashion industry is sadly no longer fashionable because it is undoubtedly very hard work and there are better rewards elsewhere. However, if you have the passion for the industry there is nowhere more exciting to work. The industry is about the two Ps - product and people. To understand product you have to have vision and look around you. To understand people you have to listen and be prepared to be a chameleon to work with the different temperaments of designers, producers, financiers and chief executives.

'I always try to go with instinct and work on things I personally love. If it feels genuine, the process then becomes easier and more enjoyable'

Matthew Williamson, designer



MICHELLE MONE

Founder, Ultimo

If you want to set up your own business you need to do your homework, check out the competition, make a very detailed business plan, look at who your customers are and what the margins would be. Think about what will make your business different. Think outside the box. Your business doesn't have to be the cheapest. It could have a better service. You need a can-do attitude, and you've got to be willing to take a risk.

GIFI FIELDS

Founder, Coppernob

I always remember being a 19-year-old and starting up my own business. The first person to influence me was the great 1960s and 1970s fabric producer Arnold Crook. He looked me in the eye and said, "Gifster, the cleverest thing is to be simple". I've carried that thought ever since.



LANCE CLARK

Former managing director, Clarks

My mentor was [Kenneth] Bancroft Clark, who built Clarks to the leading international footwear business. He persuaded me to join the business and was an exceptional leader. His brilliant innovations from the children's fit to the Cema vulcanising of children's shoes rather than stitching them together and his obsession with quality and design of the product were inspirational.

A life in the footwear industry has been immensely rewarding with constant change and many interesting friends around the world. My key advice for anyone looking to enter the footwear industry would be to make sure you have a passion for shoes.

GEORGE DAVIES

Retail entrepreneur

The thing that underpins what I have achieved in life is having a strong set of principles. My mother taught me the importance of morals from a young age and this has stayed with me throughout my career.

Joining Littlewoods at the age of 21 was a huge learning experience. Not only did they teach me the fundamentals, with regular written and verbal exams, but also over the four years I learnt business and design skills that are still with me today.



SARAH CURRAN

Founder, My-Wardrobe

To start your own business you need to understand your product and your market. You need to do the research to ensure that there is a big enough market there to launch your business and that the opportunity is great enough to achieve what you set out to achieve.

Finally have complete belief in what you want to achieve, whether that's a promotion, seeking an investor or securing a brand, it's amazing how your passion and belief can help the conversation or situation.



EDWARD SEXTON

Tailor

Ronald Scherrer, who I worked with in the cutting room at Kilgour French, was a constant support to me. The way he spoke and instructed... he had this authority about him. When designing and making clothes it's very important to have that authority and upper hand about you. One of the guys made a remark about my accent and Ronnie took me to one side and said, "you are a talented person, you're not here for elocution lessons. You will be dressing pop stars and aristocracy as clients". I tell my young apprentices this story. It puts them at ease.

'It's amazing how your passion and belief can help the conversation or situation'

Sarah Curran, founder, My-Wardrobe

The past decade has seen fashion retail change out of all proportion. The arrival and growth of new sales channels such as online and mobile, together with a focus on international retail, has not only meant that fashion businesses have had to radically adjust the way they operate, but also the skillset they require.

Traditional professions such as buying and merchandising have had to keep pace with these changes. Sally Heath, head of multichannel buying at high street retailer New Look, has seen these changes first-hand during her 13-year buying career. She cites the arrival of fast fashion and the shift towards multichannel as having the greatest impact on her profession. "Certainly big businesses like ours, which are traditionally bricks and mortar, are definitely thinking more multichannel. Ecommerce isn't its own channel anymore, you have to think of it all as one big shop, and buying and merchandising teams have had to evolve," she says.

PRACTICALLY SHE SAYS ONLINE BUYERS and merchandisers have to think about how many options there are per line, how they put a collection together, and how it is visually merchandised. "Asos has proved that to some extent there is a limit to how much you can have online without it being very busy. [At] what page number do people start turning off?"

Julie Donnelly, head of womenswear buying at fashion retailer Very.co.uk, agrees the skills required for buying have changed. "In traditional bricks-and-mortar retail, the majority of buyers still build ranges by collections and looks. Online the majority of customers search by product type and any range duplication [is] highlighted immediately. That means that each piece must stand out on its own merits."

She adds: "After all, customers will be turned off immediately if all they are faced with is a sea of black trousers. It is no bad thing for the industry as a whole that that places greater pressure on buyers to select individually fantastic pieces."

Heath says while some of the principles stay the same, "a bestseller will always be a bestseller no matter what channel it goes through", it's now about how that's presented. Buyers must work more closely with their online teams, and have an understanding of their online audiences. Heath says New Look's online customer is slightly younger, and that they have more plus-size customers who might lack the confidence to go shopping in stores. "You have to segment your product opportunities and try to focus on who your customer is. The opportunity is different and you have to

understand that. You have to spend time with your analytics team and understand what it is that your customer is looking for every week."

The rise of multichannel has brought with it a plethora of new roles, such as online copywriters and editors, and social media roles. James Nuttall, marketing, ecommerce and content manager at directional menswear retailer Oki-ni, says retailers require skills that didn't exist a few years ago, with an understanding of digital marketing, paid search, affiliates, analytics and social media all on that list.

Changing technology is affecting all areas of the business, says Nuttall. For example, a copywriter [marketing again] must now also understand social media and how to ensure the copy they are writing is working. "The skills used to be siloed, but now they're really combined," he says.

"Better knowledge acquired through travelling around Europe and emerging markets – backpacking around Thailand probably isn't that valuable – is both enjoyable and valuable to future employers," he says.

PESCOTT'S VIEWS ARE ECHOED by Maria Hollins, trading director at e-tailer Asos. "As the business has grown we're required to think more about the global customer and seasonality," she says.

"Our international expansion has seen in-territory offices opening in Sydney and New York, with more planned for next year. Within these local operations is a team that plays an integral role in growing these markets and ensuring our proposition is relevant in terms of pricing, merchandising, buying, delivery, digital marketing and localised editorial."

Wired into the future

Job candidates' skills need to keep pace with the boom in multichannel and international retail

Words by **JENNIFER WHITEHEAD** Illustration by **ANDY MARTIN**

With a flat retail market at home in the UK, retailers are casting their gaze overseas to more lucrative markets, and as such skills in this area are in high demand.

Alex Pescott, chief executive of executive search company Fusion Associates, which counts Ralph Lauren, Timberland and Lacoste among its clients, says: "Ten years ago, globalisation wasn't so prevalent. Today, even small brands have to 'internationalise' themselves in order to compete effectively in the market."

He acknowledges that ecommerce has simplified the process, but says: "To do it professionally requires multilingual sites, including geo-specific copywriting, logistics and customer services."

When it comes to skills that might help a candidate get ahead in fashion, Pescott advises learning a language – he cites German, Italian, French, and Mandarin as the most useful – and to become better travelled.

Despite these changes, people skills are still essential for retail. However, this doesn't just mean in store and face to face, but providing the highest level of service no matter where in the world someone is shopping with a retailer, or which channel they are doing it through.

When hiring for Oki-ni, Nuttall says it's not necessarily about qualifications but about transferable skills and those that are often easy to teach. This could mean a familiarity with content management systems (CMS) – for Nuttall this means anything from Facebook, to managing an eBay shop, or being able to use Photoshop.

"It's not often that I'm looking for a particular degree, it's being knowledgeable and savvy and having an interest in how things work," he says.

For anyone aspiring to be one of tomorrow's fashion's leaders, digital know-how and linguistic abilities should put you one step ahead of the competition. 🌈



‘You can teach assertiveness and management skills. To a degree you can teach confidence, but you can’t teach creativity and intuitiveness’

John Lewis’ buying and brand director believes working in different areas of the industry from small to big companies is a valuable learning curve

Words by
ANA
SANTI



Is there such a thing as the perfect fashion industry CV? Probably not, but if there was, it would most likely look like Peter Ruis'. The John Lewis buying and brand director has such a breadth of experience across different sectors of the industry that his CV ticks pretty much every box. The largest, UK own-label clothing retailer? Check. A smaller, retail and wholesale branded business? Check. A US company? Check. A multi-brand and own-label department store? You're getting the picture... check.

"I think it's always good for someone to work for a big company and a small company if they can. If you can cope with it - and for some people's mentality a big company is too corporate - it's a really good training ground. Big companies give you discipline and cross-functional working, which can be hard when you're young - talking to very linear people who are really square when you're 21, 22 and you can't work out where these people have come from," says Ruis, who joined Marks & Spencer on a graduate training scheme in 1989, before moving to Ted Baker eight years later as head of product.

"Small companies are much more focused on the brand. In the days when I was at M&S, the brand meant nothing. When you go to somewhere like Ted, brand is everything," Ruis explains. "You could have doubled [the turnover] with distribution overnight, but that would have killed the brand."

THE OTHER ADVANTAGE OF WORKING for a smaller company is that you learn quickly, says Ruis, because no job is too big or too small. "At M&S, everyone did something for you. At Ted, you were locking the doors at the end of the day, you were packing the boxes in the warehouse," Ruis remembers. "When I joined, there were 25 people, we'd just gone public and my role didn't exist. At the time, Ted was purely a casualwear company and Ray [Kelvin, its founder] wanted someone to come in and create a formal division. And he probably wanted someone from a more corporate background because at the time, the wholesale business was in independents, but it was moving towards Selfridges, Moss Bros and House of Fraser and eventually John Lewis. I was designing the range, sourcing the range, selling the range in the showroom to 100 independents. Because it's such a small company you end up doing all sorts of things and you learn a hell of a lot. I probably learnt more than I'd learnt anywhere."

Not that Ruis takes his M&S days for granted. Part of the reason he spent eight years there is because he moved from department to department regularly enough to stay interested. "My first job was buying shell suits," he laughs, adding that M&S offered a great training ground. Ruis also believes that those "less pressurised"

days were actually a good thing for a young buyer. "One of the debates we have today in terms of whether we have enough talent coming through is whether the industry has provided as good a learning ground as in the days when it was slightly less pressurised. These days, you're pretty much doing a job from the first week in. Yeah, you learn different skills, I just think..." he pauses. "Some of that stuff around really understanding the industry, of taking the time to immerse yourself. You're always going to get the pressure skills. Nowadays so much of sourcing is vertical, so your chance to really understand fabric is far more limited. It's harder to get that base knowledge."

AFTER TED BAKER, RUIS HEADED

to Amsterdam to work for Levi Strauss Europe, Middle East, Africa as brand director. "That was an adventure," he smiles. "Again, if you can have an international adventure, and it's the right time in your life, it's a good risk to take. I was doing 25 markets, learning the differences between countries and sourcing techniques, and the lifestyle experience. When I was at M&S I could have worked at Brooks Brothers in New York and I wish I had. It's tough though because Europe is a lot slower, the taste levels are so extreme, your intuitive sense is much more limited. You don't know what everyone is watching on TV in Scandinavia, for example."

Ruis is adamant that the industry needs to take more responsibility for ensuring that sort of detailed learning. "We've got to somehow, all of us, back ourselves to do more training. We've got to try as much as possible to give these people, in the first nine months to a year, the chance to learn, to travel. Everyone's counting head counts, but you need to take people out of the day to day," he insists, urging brands and retailers to "market" themselves more. "I don't think [retail] is a sought-after job. People think going to the City is where all the money is, but it's not much fun. We talk a lot about how retail

'We talk a lot about how retail employs more people than anyone else, it's a great job'

CV

2010

Promoted to buying and brand director, John Lewis

2005

Head of menswear, John Lewis

2002

Brand director for Europe, Middle East and Africa, Levi Strauss

1997

Head of product, Ted Baker

1989

Graduate trainee scheme, Marks & Spencer

employs more people than anyone else, it's a great job. It's creative, you travel, so we need to market it first to get the really good people looking at it. Then, you have to find a way of not just trusting the computer to sort through and not just going through the Duke of Edinburgh awards and the three As and all the clichés. You can teach assertiveness and management skills. To a degree you can teach confidence, but you can't teach creativity and intuitiveness."

In fact, Ruis is in favour of bringing back some of the old-school interview practices he faced in his early days. "I always love the old-fashioned, creative test of throwing product at people and giving them half an hour to create a range. I did that at my first-ever interview at M&S. I was

given....," he pauses to remember. "I think, formal shirts. So, I'm 21 years old, never worn a formal shirt in my life and they were all in white packets, they all look a bit dull, but if you can touch and feel them and you can understand them, and you can talk with some passion and it comes across. And yes, we do some tests and deliberately throw some horrible product in there, some stuff that we've rejected. It doesn't really matter if they don't create a range that you'd put in your shop as long as they feel and touch and have some passion for it."

And it's now at John Lewis where Ruis feels all his experience has come together. "Because everyone has a share [John Lewis] can never be too corporate. Because it can never be too top-down, it has a very vibrant culture. And we're very quick to market. Now we source some [of our product] in the UK, we can get to market in 10 days. We've had a unique ability to juxtapose the two [big and small company mentalities]," says Ruis, using John Lewis' now-iconic Christmas television ads as an example. "I show it to Andy [Street, John Lewis' managing director] one day before we launch. We don't have any committees. This is where I try to keep the small business mentality. Whether you're wrong or right, it's pure - you don't want the committee because that would dilute it. That's almost the legacy of John Lewis. Andy respects that and it's driven results. And when you get it wrong, you hold your hands up and say, we got it wrong."

So, Ruis doesn't regret leaving behind his initial ambition of becoming a journalist? He laughs. "I don't, no. The beauty of our industry is that it's pretty well paid. If you're good in this industry, you get to £50,000 very quickly. I don't mean good as in you're spectacular, but if you're motivated, you can get there very quickly. From that point onwards, it's about flair and ambition." 🌈

Taking the next step

Getting onto the fashion career ladder is hard enough, but how do you make the leap to managerial or director level?

Words by SUZANNE BEARNE Illustration by JIRAYU KOO

Many of today's fashion stars started at the bottom. Arcadia's David Shepherd worked as a Saturday boy at Topman, Whistles' Jane Shepherdson as a warehouse picker for Arcadia (then the Burton Group) and Monsoon's Peter Simon as a stall owner on Portobello Market. All have come a long way but they couldn't have done it without an endless supply of determination and ambition.

Diane Wilkinson, divisional manager of retail at recruitment firm Fashion & Retail Personnel, says the industry's superstars have reached the zenith of their careers by "making themselves visible within their current company, by volunteering for extra responsibilities, getting involved with project work and showing a willingness to gain experience, often without extra financial compensation".

Jo Hooper, head of womenswear at John Lewis, agrees, adding that, to become an industry star is to always carry out exceptional work. "As a buyer you are judged constantly – every day, month, year – so the first way to get noticed is to be doing a brilliant job. Also, if you're seen as having an open and enquiring mind then you will be the person who comes to the forefront of the mind when the next opportunity comes along."

One way to rise through the ranks, and particularly useful for those aspiring to become a chief executive, is to work across different departments.

David Gillan-Reid, head of finance and personnel at footwear retailer Schuh, says this is particularly pertinent to landing managerial roles. "Having an awareness of all roles in the business and understanding all aspects of product, for example, design, manufacture, quality control, and the retail environment whether online or in store, is important [for reaching the top]."

EVEN IF IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO WORK in all departments during your career, spending time in all areas of a company, even if it's just a day or a week, will help develop your understanding of how the business works, says Liz Jewitt-Cross, HR director for lifestyle brand Joules. "Your knowledge of these areas allows you to more effectively influence, input and be heard when making suggestions on existing and future initiatives," she says. She also recommends seeking out projects or secondment opportunities in departments to boost skills. "It may take you out of your comfort or experience zone but will reap dividends in the long term."

Whether your dream job is design director at All Saints, marketing director at Burberry or buying director at Selfridges, there'll never be a one-size-fits-all approach to securing it. It can take many different job roles and years until you reach your goal.

For instance, to become a buying director, if you're currently a buying assistant, you could be several roles away – usually including buyer and head of buying – until you're crowned with the title. Rising through those ranks could take eight

to 12 years. So what key attributes does an aspiring buying director need? An open mind and boundless enthusiasm, says Hooper. "For example, at John Lewis, there are lots of opportunities for the buyers to work with the PR team. It does mean going to press shows, speaking to journalists, going to trade shows and it might be on the weekend, but if you love what you do, you never turn off. It goes back to your state of mind."

Another tip for climbing the competitive buying ladder is to become an expert in both own and branded labels and work across different products.

"If you've bought denim, then demonstrate that you can turn your hand to jersey or accessories too," says Mary Anderson-Ford, director of Bloom Retail. "At director level you'll oversee the whole piece so need to have a good understanding across the board."

For those aiming to be head of merchandising, experts say merchandisers can reach that level within five years.

Stephen McDowall, head of merchandising, womenswear at Debenhams, says to reach the career peak in merchandising you need to demonstrate the ability to trade and plan several departments profitably. "But most important is to show that you have sight of the bigger picture and the company strategy. It is important not to always get bogged down in the detail and to be able to make decisions quickly."

McDowall's key advice to aspiring merchandisers is to "take a look around your organisation and think about who inspires you,



then think about what qualities they have and what you can learn from them.”

BEYOND THESE MORE TRADITIONAL roles, the industry is bursting with many other senior positions, often with higher salaries. Take the job of sourcing or production director, which can pocket a salary between £60,000 and £150,000. Holly Stone, consultant of technical, production and sales at Success Appointments, recommends starting off as a production assistant and “gaining hands-on experience with manufacturers” before climbing the necessary steps – co-ordinator level, production manager and head of production – and then securing a production or sourcing director role. She estimates this could take about 15 years.

For those new to the industry or even for those seeking change, HR directors and recruitment consultants have identified two areas of the industry that will see their importance grow even further.

Online is, of course, one of them. Due to the growth of ecommerce and the constantly changing technology scene, new roles in this part of the industry are always being created. Less than 10 years ago roles such as head of social media, ecommerce director and head of multichannel were pretty much nonexistent; now they’re critical parts of the business.

James Hudson, head of recruitment (global) at Net-A-Porter, says employers are going to be looking for ‘digital natives’ in every area of the business. “The pace of technological change is staggering and will only increase,” he says. “The stars of the future will be completely at home in this changing landscape and working as part of distributed global teams will be second nature. What won’t change is that team working, either as a contributor or leader, will always be about interpersonal relationships, and whether you’re communicating face to face, via video conference or virtual meeting, it will always pay to be nice.”

Mathew Dixon, director at recruitment firm Hudson Walker International, pinpoints senior roles at retail level as increasingly significant posts.

“Luxury brands are putting more focus on retail as they want to be able to control the customer experience of their brand [rather than depend on wholesale]. In this country retail is seen as a stop gap and has a dreadful kudos but internationally it’s different. The amount someone can make in retail can be astonishing, anything from £100,000 and upwards.” To become such a retail leader it’s important to be multi-lingual and to have worked abroad.

However, as much as moving sideways, improving business knowledge and extraordinary talent will be applauded and reap awards, you can only land your dream job by demonstrating unrelenting ambition and determination. As Hooper says, “Your destiny is in your own hands. If you really want to, you can go as far as you want.” 🌈

One year later...

The Outnet's Ellie Peters was a student when she visited last year's Next Generation. So what did she learn?

Interview by JENNIFER WHITEHEAD

Drapers / JANUARY 2013 — 32



When Ellie Peters attended last year's annual Drapers Next Generation Academy she was an aspiring Fashion

Retail Management graduate from Birmingham City University looking for her first step in the fashion industry. She was so inspired by what she saw that it propelled her into her first role as a buyer's assistant at discount retailer TheOutnet. *Drapers* catches up with her to find out what she has learned and what advice she has for the class of 2013.

→ **What did you get out of the Drapers Next Generation Academy?** It gave me the determination to forge my career in the industry, and helped me develop the skills to achieve the position I am now in at TheOutnet. Talks from influential figures such as [then BFC chairman] Harold Tillman were extremely inspiring; they showed me that if you are willing to work hard you can accomplish great results.

→ **How is your life different to this time last year?** I was a student in fashion retail, balancing an internship at fashion chain Store Twenty One with producing a final-year dissertation. Fast-forward a year and I'm now part of one of the most successful groups in the industry. The jump from intern to employee is a hard one; responsibility can be daunting. Now, rather than filing and photocopying, I'm working alongside a global buying team.

→ **What does your job involve?** My typical day involves meeting with the merchandising team to analyse brand performances and sales. This helps to determine the product I select when attending brand appointments and sourcing stock. The assistant buyer is based in our Manhattan [New York] offices, and we speak daily. The move from intern to buyer's assistant was challenging, but also hugely rewarding.

→ **Where do you see your career progressing?** I really enjoy working at The Outnet. Buying has very clear progression levels, so I'm hoping to work my way up to one day become a buying director.

→ **Do you have any advice for people who want a career in fashion?** Internships are key. They don't need to be carried out with top designer brands or household names; experience in small start-ups can be a great opportunity to gain experience. Being enthusiastic is also important. It doesn't matter if it's making the tea or attending fashion week, you need to show you're happy to do any task.

→ **Is there anything you know now that you wish you'd known a few years ago?** I wish I'd known how important it is to seize every opportunity, and don't be afraid to take a risk. Get yourself in front of the right people and take chances that others might not take – that will get you ahead and make you stand out. 🌈