

Q&A

# Off the Cuff: A Q&A with Blade's Roisin Branch

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*Roisin Branch is U.S. aviation company Blade's first chief marketing officer. Image courtesy of Blade*

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By AMIRAH KEATON

Introducing "Off the Cuff," a new Q&A series from Luxury Daily exploring the career paths, current projects and next steps of those shaping the world's best luxury brands.

The interviews feature a Proust-style twist, allowing readers to get to know industry leaders on a personal level. The fourth edition features Roisin Branch, chief marketing officer at U.S. aviation company **Blade**.

In this Q&A, Ms. Branch discusses her take on the state of luxury marketing and unveils a debut residential project on behalf of the company, among other updates. Here is the dialogue:



*Blade announces a new partnership with Sutton Tower in Manhattan. Image courtesy of Blade*

## **What was your first job ever? What did it teach you?**

I was incredibly lucky to start my career selling Smirnoff and launching Smirnoff Ice for Diageo in the Canary Islands.

I was an assistant brand manager and could not believe I was getting paid to create activations for one of the most iconic brands in the world. That was when I truly fell in love with brand marketing and understood the power it has, if done right, to

change people's behaviors at scale.

**Which skills have been critical to your success? Did you gain these skills within or outside of the workplace?**

Empathy, creativity, business acumen and grit.

Empathy is at the top of the list, as it is what allows me to relate to customers, understand what makes them tick and identify meaningful insights that unlock breakthrough innovations and creative work. It is also what makes me an effective people leader, understanding how to get the best out of individuals.

Creativity is essential in the world of marketing and this applies as much to coming up with new ideas and products as it does to recognizing a great idea and boldly betting on it against the odds. Business acumen allows me to stay focused on the bigger picture and leverage creativity and innovation for both the short and long-term growth of the business it is how I stay friends with our CFO.

Last but not least is grit. While I have always loved what I do and feel very grateful to get to build some of the world's most iconic brands day in and day out, no job is all sunshine and rainbows, especially when a huge part of the job is pushing past "no" and proving you can do things that have never been done before.

**What is the best piece of advice you've ever received?**

Trust your gut and embrace failure.

Go for it, fail as many times as necessary, pick yourself up, learn from your mistakes and keep climbing. No one makes it to the top without bruises and scars.

**How has your field changed since you started out in luxury, and what do you think the industry will look like in a decade?**

It is barely recognizable if I am honest. When I started out, us marketers knew that "half of our spend was wasted," we just did not know what half, and it was concentrated in a handful of traditional channels.

Today, the marketing landscape is much more dynamic, diverse and efficient. AI is already unlocking efficiencies in data mining, customer service support and creative iterations.

*Blade operates in the U.S. and Canada, entering Europe most recently in 2022*

So much more can be measured and iterated in real time and that is incredibly exciting and valuable to optimize and justify spend.

However, it can also lead to a disproportionate focus on short-term conversion at the expense of sustainable long-term brand equity and growth, generated by old-school brilliant creativity, quality of service and obsessive attention to detail, which is much more challenging to track in the short-term.

CMOs' challenge across all industries is striking the right balance between the two and identifying marketing opportunities that can be revenue-generating for the business, turning the function from a cost center to a profit center. I believe the world of luxury will continue to lean even more heavily into personal touch, attention to detail and meaningful human connections as AI makes interactions with intelligent machines an even greater part of our everyday lives.

**What recent projects have reignited your passion for working in luxury? Do any upcoming Blade launches excite you?**

One of the many reasons I love working for Blade is that we are constantly finding new ways to elevate experiences for our target audience (no pun intended!).

One exciting way to achieve this goal is by collaborating with partners who share our values and attention to detail. It is summer in New York City, where we are based, which means people are consistently heading in and out of town, and alternative travel, especially air travel, is in high demand.

It was a perfect time for us to announce our newest partnership with Sutton Tower, the tallest condo on Manhattan's East Side. Residents of the building will now have incomparable Blade benefits as part of their amenity package, which includes discounts on flights and concierge booking services, and are just moments from the Blade Aqua Lounge on East 23rd.

We are always looking for new ways to introduce our services to a new audience, and the response to this collaboration has

been incredible.

**Who in any industry or sphere would you most like to share a long lunch with and where would you take them?**

Deepak Chopra. He is whip-smart, highly educated, deeply grounded and a fantastic communicator. He focused on his passion and turned it into an empire that inspires millions of people to live better lives.

While some in the spiritual world are upset about his monetization of spirituality, I admire it and believe it is what our society needs more of right now. I would have to bring him somewhere vegetarian, I would guess.

Maybe Blue Hill at Stone Barns. Google and Blade partnered recently to organize a women's executive lunch [at the Tarrytown, New York restaurant], and the food is outstanding and all grown in their backyard.

I think he would appreciate it as much as I did. And, of course, we would fly there from Blade Lounge West.

**How do you get into the right mindset before a big meeting or presentation?**

I do not skip my morning workout. It helps me clear my head and release tension.

I take a SoulCycle or a Barry's class. I also have different playlists I listen to.

I have an upbeat and motivational playlist that I play before a big presentation to get me pumped up or I will choose something more mellow ahead of an important but potentially controversial meeting, to calm and center myself.

**On your days off, what can you be found doing to relax or have some fun?**

I love living in New York City, so I get out and about on my days off, enjoying the big backyard we all pay so much for.

I enjoy walks in Central Park and dinner and drinks out in the latest hot spots. I also make time for workouts and meditation, which help increase my productivity and spirits.

**What does luxury mean to you?**

Luxury is an attitude that involves knowing what one wants and unapologetically spending time and money on those deeply personal pleasures.

**Whether a product or experience, what is your favorite luxury indulgence?**

Taking a Blade along the French Riviera.

I just did it again when I was in Cannes for the Lions Festival of Creativity, and it was the best thing ever.