

Q&A

Off the Cuff: A Q&A with eBay's Mari Corella

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In February 2024, Mari Corella moved from managing eBay's home and hard goods team to overseeing its global luxury and sneakers division.

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 ninth edition features Mari Corella, general manager of global luxury and sneakers at online retail platform eBay.

In this Q&A, Ms. Corella discusses navigating the fashion industry and ascending its ranks, sourcing inspiration from the world of finance and more. Here is the dialogue:



The reseller launched a pop-in in Manhattan's Diamond District last year, offering preowned luxury items offline. Image courtesy of eBay

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

My first job was buying vintage clothing at thrift stores and selling it to a resale clothing shop for profit.

This was in the 1990s before eBay existed and flipping wasn't a thing yet, so thrift stores were goldmines for designer vintage clothes. I eventually ended up working for that resale clothing shop where I learned about fashion trends and how to value clothing ranging from 1920s dresses to Louis Vuitton handbags.

I didn't realize it then, but those real-life experiences were essentially Fashion Business 101. I learned P&L management, marketing strategies, product merchandising, and trend detection.

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

My father was an art teacher, and I was an art history major, so I've always had an appreciation for visual aesthetics and its tie to emotions. However, I also had a strong suit for numbers and logic.

Being able to balance these two sides is critical in the emotionally based luxury sector. Being able to understand consumer motivations and match them to a product and experience isn't something that shows up in a spreadsheet.

It also doesn't show up purely in gut instinct, there has to be a balance of both. And while not everyone needs to excel in both to be successful, a team must have a balance of both in order to succeed.

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

After college, I worked at an art museum but soon realized my heart was in fashion. I networked with professionals in the fashion industry in hopes of landing a job.

One person told me that the hardest part of breaking into any industry is getting your foot in the door, taking whatever position you can get and moving up from there. So that's what I did.

I landed myself an entry-level position at Gap's corporate offices in San Francisco. From there, I learned the different functions within the retail industry and, within a year, transitioned into an online merchandising role that set my career trajectory.

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

When I started my fashion career in the mid-2000s, ecommerce was still in its infancy, and many retail leaders thought it to be a fad.

I dealt with many situations with non-ecommerce coworkers who challenged the work my team was doing. It wasn't until the pandemic, when online shopping took center stage, that the sentiment changed.

I was working for a luxury conglomerate at the time and saw an incredible shift in the openness and resources put towards digital technologies. The momentum still continues as luxury brands have not only embraced the digital shopping experience but are investing in it.

At eBay, we're committed to supporting this shift by putting resources toward digital-first services like eBay Live our live shopping platform that allows younger shoppers to interact directly with products and sellers in a digital setting alongside innovations like "shop the look," an AI-powered tool that makes it easy to participate in the circular economy while expressing your personal style.

What upcoming eBay projects are you most excited to work on?

While every project brings me excitement, cross-border trade expanding our services like eBay consignment and Shop the Look to the U.K., Germany and other markets like Japan and APAC is a project that I am really enthusiastic about.

We've been investing heavily in our fashion category, including sneakers, streetwear, and luxury accessories, over the past few years with the goal of making it easy for brands, sellers and buyers from everywhere to participate in the circular economy.

As someone who has traveled the world and lived in many countries, I am aware of how many unique items exist in only certain parts of the world. Some of my most memorable travel moments have been finding a treasured item at a secondhand shop abroad and having my heart skip a beat.

eBay is a global marketplace with unparalleled inventory and reach, and we are working to make buying and selling from anywhere in the world a more seamless experience. Seeing more unique supply on our site with each passing day reminds me of my international treasures unearthed on my personal travels, and I am motivated to bring that emotion into more people's lives through eBay.

Is there a corporate leader, philanthropist, motivational speaker, celebrity, etc., who continually inspires you? Where would you take them for a power lunch if possible?

Personal financial guru Suze Orman inspires me. I've been following her since college and owe a lot of my financial prowess to the knowledge I've gained from reading her books and listening to her podcast.

She understands that money isn't just a numbers game, but an emotional one as well and business, particularly in the fashion industry, is very similar. I find it inspiring that she was able to overcome setbacks in her life to find success and love later in her life.

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

Getting into the right mindset starts with preparation. Socializing the content in advance can help to identify tension points and devise responses to avoid any heated on-the-spot moments.

If anxiety does rise before the big presentation, assuming positive intent is a great way to melt it away. It would be unusual to go into a meeting where we don't all have the same goals, though we may have different opinions on how to get there.

Assuming positive intent helps deflect a tense personality into an ally.

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

I recently purchased a 1910 Victorian home in San Francisco that I am renovating and while some may consider it to be work, I find it enjoyable to tap into my creative side and research all the design possibilities. I'm also excited to see what eBay treasures I can discover to add to my design vision.

What does luxury mean to you?

Luxury, to me, is pride. Luxury goods and experiences are not throwaway commodities.

They are meant to be desired, treasured and, when attained, they bring a great source of gratitude for the journey it took to get there.

At eBay, we want to aid that journey by offering customers rare, unique, and coveted pieces from around the world they can't find anywhere else, making it easy to engage with circular fashion.

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

Outside of luxury, I find value in experiences.

I am an avid music fan and spent much of my youth going to concerts where I could only afford the nosebleed seats. Or worse, being in general admission where my 5-foot-tall self spent the evening staring at someone's back.

So, these days, I do indulge in the nice seats where I can actually see the band.