



MARLIN HAWK

# Marlin Hawk Industry Pulse

The Talent Tapestry:

Weaving Luxury's Workforce  
for the Future

# Introduction: Redefining Leadership in Luxury

In the luxury industry, leadership isn't just about steering the business. It's about preserving legacy while propelling transformation, which can be a delicate line to tread. As consumer expectations evolve and market volatility intensifies, luxury brands must reimagine the C-suite. They must be bold yet refined, innovative yet rooted in heritage.

Hiring trends at the C-suite level now reflect a need for broader expertise. Digital fluency, sustainability leadership, and global mindset are no longer optional. They're essential for leading modern luxury brands. These new demands are prompting major strategic shifts at the executive level. Leaders are rethinking how they deliver value, relevance, and long-term resilience while maintaining brand integrity. The value of transferrable skills is rising. Executives from adjacent industries are entering luxury, bringing new energy and cross-sector insight without compromising the brand's essence. It poses the question: is luxury leaning towards a skills-based hiring approach?

In this environment, talent attraction strategies are changing. Today's top executives seek purpose, cultural alignment, and the opportunity to lead meaningful change. Luxury brands must position themselves as employers of choice, not just status symbols. Against this backdrop, the C-suite faces complex challenges: from navigating uncertainty and global disruption to managing evolving consumer expectations and internal transformation.

Meeting these challenges requires hospitable change: a leadership mindset that is open, agile, and future-focused. With the lines of luxury hospitality and fashion brands becoming blurred, organisations are now looking beyond the traditional talent pools that were once recycled across brands.

**Marlin Hawk does not just find talent – we help build leadership legacies. Every hire should strengthen both the team and the future of the brand.**

# The High-Touch Hiring Trends



## Technology and AI

82% of customers want AI to assist in reducing research time before purchase.

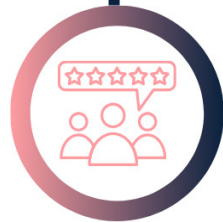
**Meaning:** An increased demand for a VP of AI or Chief AI Officer to optimise personalisation and predictive analytics.



## Supply Chain and Localisation

72% of fashion executives cite supply chain disruptions as a profitability challenge.

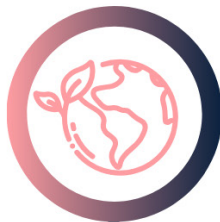
**Meaning:** The rise in Chief Supply Chain Officers (CSCOs) drives localisation, demand forecasting, and agile inventory management.



## Customer Experience

75% of shoppers spend more after receiving high-quality in-store service, boosting upsell and cross-sell opportunities.

**Meaning:** There is a growth in Chief Experience Officer (CXO) or Chief Customer Officer (CCO) roles to enhance interactions, driving customer loyalty and building exclusive CRM programs.



## Sustainability and ESG

76% of Gen Z and Millennial luxury shoppers consider sustainability when making purchasing decisions.

**Meaning:** The expansion of Chief Sustainability Officers (CSOs) to implement circular fashion, ethical sourcing, and ESG compliance.



## Omnichannel and Digital Commerce

74% of customers abandon online purchases due to choice overload, and 80% leave searches dissatisfied, with 41% of these leaving due to irrelevant results.

**Meaning:** The rise of Chief Omnichannel Officers (COOs) streamlines product discovery and reduces choice paralysis.



## HR and Talent Acquisition

68% of luxury employees prioritise purpose-driven workplaces, with retention challenges at an all-time high.

**Meaning:** The growth of Chief People Officers (CPOs) drives culture, diversity, and talent retention in a competitive job market.



## Global Transformation

65% of luxury fashion CEOs and CFOs are hired to drive digital transformation and global expansion as brands invest in technology to stay competitive.

**Meaning:** CEOs and CFOs who are skilled in innovation and global scalability are in higher demand to integrate digital technologies and expand internationally.



## Marketing and Brand Strategy

70% of luxury consumers expect hyper-personalised brand experiences across all touchpoints.

**Meaning:** Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) who can lead data-driven personalisation are in higher demand, provoking a new focus on hiring VPs of Product Strategy for digital-first brand storytelling.



## Retail and Store

65% of luxury shoppers want more immersive in-store experiences blending digital and physical touchpoints.

**Meaning:** An increased focus on VP of Retail Innovation to enhance experiential shopping and omnichannel consistency.

# Haute Takes: C-Suite Challenges and Reflections

As the luxury market is increasingly disrupted by digital transformation, changing consumer behaviours and sustainability demands, luxury executives must prioritise several key pillars to ensure continued success.

## Situation



### Brand Exclusivity

- 67% of luxury consumers value brand heritage, but 72% of Gen Z prioritise cultural relevance
- 75% of luxury brands engage in cross-industry partnerships
- Regional influencer collaborations boost brand affinity and sales by 30%
- AI-driven personalisation increases engagement by 20-25%, yet only 39% of brands fully utilise it



### Sustainability and Ethics in Luxury

- Sustainability demand is rising, but trust is low - transparency is key
- 63% of luxury consumers are more likely to buy from brands that have a clear commitment to ethical production
- Luxury resale is booming and is expected to grow 12-15% annually through 2050
- Global luxury goods market is expected to face a 2% decline in 2025



### Leadership Resilience

- Analysts expect slow luxury growth until 2027, making it even more crucial for CEOs to build resilient strategies
- Retaining top creative and executive talent is crucial amid industry shifts as leadership stability impacts brand consistency and growth
- Investing in diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives is essential for global appeal and fostering innovation within teams



### Consumer Demographics

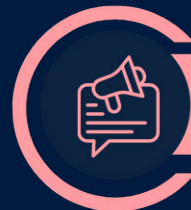
- 48% of global spending comes from consumers aged 50+. This requires an EU fashion GTM strategy focused on intergenerational appeal and versatility
- More than 60% of consumers will consider production and sustainability values before purchasing
- By 2030, 70% of luxury market customers will be Gen Z and Millennials
- Popular payment options (eg. BNPL) will make luxury goods more accessible



### Digital Transformation and Omnichannel Excellence

- Immersive, engaging brand experiences through physical retail using AR/VR
- QR codes and live shopping events are on the rise
- Online sales in the luxury market are projected to reach \$91 billion by 2025. Understanding the importance of robust digital platforms is essential
- Hyper-Personalisation: 71% of consumers prefer highly personalised content

## Resulting Questions



### Brand Exclusivity

- How do we modernise our brand for Gen Z while preserving the exclusivity of our heritage?
- How do we leverage influencers to drive desirability without overexposing the brand?
- How can AI deepen exclusivity and personalisation but maintain uniqueness?



### Sustainability and Ethics in Luxury

- How do we make sustainability a true brand asset rather than just a compliance checkbox?
- How can we prove our ethical commitment in a way that enhances brand credibility and exclusivity?
- How do we participate in the resale market while enforcing exclusivity and pricing power?



### Leadership Resilience

- How do we sustain brand desirability and momentum in a slow-growth luxury market?
- How do we attract and retain visionary talent while maintaining brand consistency?
- How can DEI drive both global brand relevance and internal innovation?
- How do we navigate geopolitical risks (trade policies, tariffs, economic sanctions) while maintaining global brand strength?



### Consumer Demographics

- Are we adapting fast enough to the evolving luxury consumer profile?
- How do we authentically integrate sustainability into our brand story to drive consumer trust and loyalty?
- Are we fully maximising our CRM data to drive customer lifetime value and exclusivity?
- Is our pricing strategy aligned with consumers without compromising desirability?



### Digital Transformation and Omnichannel Excellence

- How do we measure the ROI of immersive technologies (AR/VR, live shopping) to ensure they align with our brand vision and deliver financial value?
- Are we fully integrating online and offline customer data to drive personalisation and anticipate consumer needs?
- How do we drive sales without over-saturating our audience?



# What Attracts Top Talent to the Allure of Prestige

Your external narrative is your first touchpoint with talent. How you market the role externally matters. The same artistry and attention to detail that defines your brand's identity should also shape the way you identify, secure and attract exceptional leadership talent. But what should you be implementing across your talent acquisition strategies?

01

In a fast-moving market, top candidates won't wait for overly drawn out processes. **Reducing time-to-hire and ensuring a seamless candidate experience is critical.**

02

Diverse teams drive stronger business results. **Reassess whether your hiring process could unintentionally be filtering out diverse talent.**

03

Counteroffers are on the rise. **Top candidates are constantly being poached by competitors. What is your strategy to prevent buyback?**

04

With economic uncertainty, candidates are more risk averse. **Analyse how your competitors navigate this volatile market.**

05

As silver spenders (aged 55+) become a key audience, **companies should rethink hiring internally to better reflect and serve this key demographic.**

## The Luxury of Working from Home Debate

The future of work in luxury calls for thoughtful, innovative solutions that elevate both performance and employee experience.

McKinsey stated structured hybrid models are now the standard, with 43% of organisations adopting set in-office schedules. Fully flexible approaches are declining (currently at 25%) as most companies settle around a three-day in-office rhythm. While smaller businesses (70%) lean into flexibility to compete for top talent, larger organisations (73%) are opting for more defined structures.

However, some are going further. The introduction of four-day work weeks is becoming a mark of workforce prestige, signalling a deep commitment to employee wellbeing. Others are sustaining flexible frameworks to protect their most valuable asset: talent.

According to Employee Benefits Data collected by Opinium (from a survey conducted on 500 HR professionals in 2024), businesses are prioritising three distinct areas when it comes to talent retention and attraction:

91%

Hybrid Work

38%

Wellness Day/Gym Access

34%

Commute Subsidy

# What Attracts Top Talent to the Allure of Prestige?

Luxury houses, streetwear brands, and high-end experiences may share a market, but each has a distinct aspiration. While they all sit under the umbrella of premium consumer offerings, their value does not lie in their product alone, but also in the emotion, identity and lifestyle they evoke.

The invisible string that connects them all is narrative. Each tells a story that speaks to a particular desire, whether it be heritage, rebellion, innovation, or exclusivity, building emotional resonance and long-term loyalty. The result is a market unified by meaning, yet defined by nuance.

## Luxury Fashion Houses

**Heritage luxury brands with decades of influence.**

- Exceptional in branding and storytelling
- Master timeless appeal through innovation and tradition

**Leadership expertise needed in:**

- Brand elevation
- Heritage marketing
- Strategic partnerships

## Luxury Streetwear and Contemporary Brands

**New fashion labels blend streetwear with luxury designs for a younger audience.**

- Innovative bold collaborations and viral campaigns
- Appeal to younger, digitally-engaged audiences through social media and influencer partnerships

**Leadership expertise needed in:**

- Cultural trend integration
- Youth-driven marketing
- Strategic collaborations and digital engagement

## Luxury Goods and Experiences

**Luxury brands that extend beyond fashion into lifestyle and experiences: such as the luxury travel industry, jewellery, beauty etc.**

- Create aspirational value through products, services and immersive storytelling
- Forge deep connections with consumers, fostering brand loyalty and emotional engagement

**Leadership expertise needed in:**

- Product diversification and lifestyle integration
- Experience-driven marketing
- Emotional brand connection and differentiation

## Talent Strategy

Opening up to a more skills-based hiring strategy can equip luxury brands with the right leaders to navigate challenges and drive sustained growth in a dynamic industry.

### Identifying Adaptable Leaders

Driving digital transformation and change in response to evolving consumer trends, such as social media and influencer marketing.

### Future Proofing Leadership

Enabling brands to move towards a sustainable future by bringing out-of-industry experience to the table.

### Succession Planning

Strengthening internal talent pipelining and identifying 'rising stars' for interim and shadow leadership.

# Threading Worlds Together: When Luxury Fashion, Beauty, and Travel Converge

In today's competitive luxury hospitality market, hotels, resorts, and travel brands are redefining guest experiences by drawing inspiration from the worlds of high fashion and beauty.

This shift has led to an increasing demand for talent from these industries as well as a large cross over of intersectional talent, bringing a refined level of craftsmanship, personalisation, and brand storytelling to the travel sector.

01

## Four Seasons

- Focused on guest experience and brand consistency through a strong CEO-led vision.
- Expanded into residences and branded experiences to diversify revenue streams.
- Appointed a Chief Experience Officer to ensure seamless integration of digital and in-person services.

02

## Aman Resorts

- Maintains an ultra-luxury niche by selecting leaders with deep knowledge of exclusivity and personalisation.
- Expansion strategy focuses on low-density, high-value properties, requiring executives skilled in high-net worth engagement.
- CEO appointment prioritised a balance between financial acumen and brand preservation.

03

## LVMH Hospitality (Cheval Blanc and Belmond)

- Adopted a luxury fashion brand playbook to elevate hotel experiences.
- Recruited executives from fashion and retail to bring a storytelling-driven brand approach.
- Leveraged cross-brand synergies to create high-impact partnerships with other LVMH maisons.

## Hospitality Talent Reimagined: Where it is Headed

Luxury travel is undergoing a strategic shift. With hospitality leaders now prioritising brand storytelling and experiential design, the demand for talent with cross-industry credentials is rising. Heritage craftsmanship, tailored experiences, and emotional connection are becoming key differentiators. This is driving brands to look beyond conventional hiring models.

Recent figures show a 42% increase in luxury hospitality roles filled by professionals from fashion, beauty, and retail, underscoring a move toward more lifestyle-led leadership. This convergence signals a new direction.

In this landscape, the ability to connect brands with boundary-pushing, creatively-fluent talent is becoming essential to secure a future defined by elevated, immersive guest experiences.

## Real Life Case Studies of Convergence



**Michael Grieve was the former Chief Brand Officer at Gucci.**

**New Role:** He joined Jumeirah Group as Chief Marketing Officer. His move underscores the increasing convergence between luxury fashion and hospitality, aiming to reinforce brand strategies and customer experiences within the hotel industry.



**Rattan Chadha was a former CEO of Mexx, a global fashion brand.**

**New Role:** He founded citizenM, a global hotel chain focused on affordable luxury.



**Laurent Kleitman was formerly the President and CEO of Parfums Christian Dior.**

**New Role:** He was appointed as the Group Chief Executive of Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group in September 2023. His extensive experience in the luxury sector is expected to enhance the brand's global portfolio of luxury hotels, resorts, and residences.



**Stéphane Rinderknech was previously leading LVMH's beauty division.**

**Expanded role:** His role has now expanded to oversee the group's hospitality excellence sector, which includes Cheval Blanc and Belmond hotels. This move underscores LVMH's commitment to incorporating luxury brand experiences into their hospitality ventures.



# Conclusion

The future of luxury demands more than incremental refinements. It requires reinvention. From hiring trends and strategic C-suite shifts to the rise of transferrable skills and cross-sector creativity, industry talent and trends are evolving fast. Talent from fashion, beauty, and lifestyle sectors is shaping new consumer expectations, while structured flexibility and inclusive leadership are setting the tone. Success now hinges on adaptability, emotional intelligence, and vision. Luxury is no longer just about heritage – it's about relevance. Instead of merely keeping up with change, those leading the charge are redefining the pace of change. The most iconic experiences will be those built by the most dynamic minds.

# Our Approach

Through our Strategic Intelligence services, Marlin Hawk is accustomed to mapping the market, assessing how different organisations shape and structure their companies and functions to ensure maximum success. Through identifying critical gaps, delivering data-rich information about the market, and looking to adjacent market-leading organisations, businesses can remain competitive in terms of talent, business models and organisational structures.

# About Marlin Hawk

Marlin Hawk is a global leadership advisory firm specialising in executive search, strategic intelligence, and interim management. For over 20 years, we've empowered our clients with data and insights to make diverse, inclusive and impactful leadership decisions. One globally connected team, we are headquartered in London with offices in New York, Denver, Toronto, Chicago, Amsterdam, Dubai, Singapore and Hong Kong. Unconstrained by a one-size-fits-all approach to both clients and candidates, we build relationships with care and attention to detail, while delivering at pace.



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