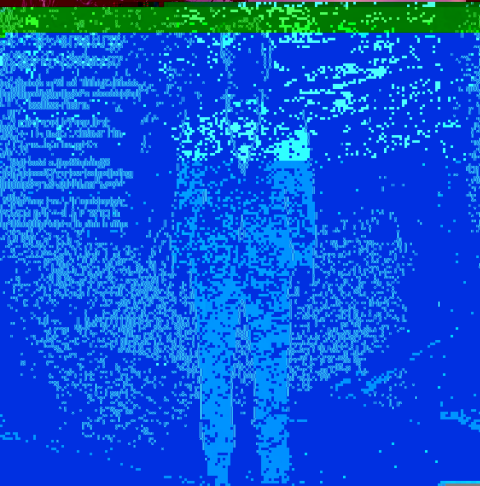


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## Melinda O'Rourke Luxury consultant

Story **David Meagher**

IF IT'S a career in the luxury-goods industry you're after now might be the optimum time to get a foot in the door. But be prepared to start at the bottom.

With several luxury companies planning big store openings in Australia next year – Louis Vuitton, Burberry, Prada, Chanel – and with some of them three times the size of their existing stores, the war for talent to work in them has already begun.

After an almost 20-year career working for some of the biggest luxury brands such as Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent and, most recently, as managing director of Prada in Australia, Melinda O'Rourke decided the local market was ready for a management consulting firm specialising in luxury goods and services.

"When you have a lot of history that's when you start to look at opportunities and I thought the time was right for someone with local knowledge and experience to create a consulting business that was focused on helping luxury brands grow in the Australian market," says O'Rourke.

She founded MO Luxury in mid-2008 and says she has already worked with 85 per cent of the luxury brands in Australia, including local fine jewellery companies, fashion designers and international luxury houses. MO Luxury works with the brands on everything from marketing and real estate to market research but O'Rourke says one of the biggest areas is in executive recruitment.

"Talent management and recruitment is the largest part of our business at the moment and that's been quite strategic because we know there is a gap in the market," she says. "It's about bringing new blood into the luxury area because there are a lot of people out there with fantastic experience in marketing or retail operations or whatever who actually want to work with luxury brands but haven't been given the opportunity.

"If I had a dollar for every time someone told me they want to work in marketing or public relations for a luxury brand ... but what I tell them is that if you're really passionate about getting into a luxury company then you've got to be prepared to start on the shop floor," says O'Rourke, who recruits for senior retail positions, such as store manager, all the way up to managing director.

"Retail is unfortunately not taken as such a serious career opportunity in this country and it's always been thus," she says. "It gets very tight at the senior executive level. But whether you want to work in human resources or marketing or even in IT, if you have an understanding of the retail side of the business then you're going to be a far more attractive candidate than someone who doesn't."