

NORDSTROM

Our Approach to Inclusive Beauty

April 1, 2021

Last October, we launched a new category called Inclusive Beauty as an extension of our existing Beauty offering. The category focuses on new-to-Nordstrom Black-founded brands and features a curated assortment of product created for everyone — no matter your skin or hair type, tone, complexion or texture. Inclusive Beauty outposts are featured in 27 Nordstrom stores and online at [Nordstrom.com/Inclusive-Beauty](https://www.nordstrom.com/inclusive-beauty). Last month, we expanded this category with the addition of 12 new Black-founded beauty brands.

"Inclusive Beauty has long been a priority at Nordstrom. We began work on this category two years ago and are proud to announce these latest partnerships with new and emerging brands that share values in diversity and truly represent the customers we serve," says Autumn West, national beauty director at Nordstrom. But this isn't just a launch of new brands to Nordstrom — we wanted this to be a mutually beneficial partnership done in an authentic way.

As a part of the process to identify new Black-founded brands to add to our Inclusive Beauty category, we enlisted the partnership of Fayetteville Road, a female, Black-owned consulting agency focusing on retail technology integration and experiential retail. We worked together to build and strengthen authentic relationships with Black-founded brands in the industry, while also creating touchpoints to engage and listen to customers with the goal of building a more authentic, inclusive retail environment and customer experience. Specifically, Fayetteville Road helped us listen to customers and gather candid feedback to inform our decisions around this category as we continue to learn and evolve our offering.

We also approached this from the perspective of being the best possible partner to help give these brands a platform and grow. A great example of this is our partnership with UOMA Beauty. We've partnered with UOMA Beauty to maximize exposure, from leveraging our digital marketing channels to taking over the windows along Broadway at Nordstrom NYC to promote the launch.

We sat down with the beauty company's founder Sharon Chuter to dig a little deeper into why this partnership works.

Why did you choose Nordstrom as your partner?

Nordstrom was serious about partnering with UOMA Beauty. With the Black Lives Matter movement last year, retailers have been rushing to get Black-owned brand partnerships without necessarily understanding the necessity of creating an ecosystem to set them up for success — this was an important criterion for me when considering partnering with a retailer. It was important they see the value we bring not just as a Black-owned brand — the brand has a greater purpose and value. When I met with the Nordstrom team, it was very clear they understood the value of UOMA and what it was bringing to the store, beyond bringing Black founders into the stores.

How have the events of 2020 changed your business and what changes have you seen in the industry?

The events of 2020 have shown the necessity for inclusivity. There has been economic segregation we have suffered from for quite some time, so I'm happy to see people understanding that. Many retailers are scrambling to bring in Black-owned brands without understanding inclusivity, which results in them recreating the ethnic aisle. It's important for companies to bring in brands for the right reasons — if you bring in brands that are not ready, they won't succeed and if you don't support them, you will crash their business which creates a bigger issue in the future. This year has been a great opportunity to slow down and think about the partners we wanted to work with.

Why do you think customers have such a strong connection to UOMA?

We are authentic and real. We are very non-corporate, and we are not afraid to make mistakes. We are not afraid to be vulnerable and share what we think — this resonates with our customers. We also make a space for people to feel welcomed, included and valued. We encourage everyone to be their authentic selves. I always joke that as long as Lionel Richie remains relevant, the brand will, because Lionel Richie has done a great job of celebrating one product — and that's love. Everyone wants to feel good and if you create spaces where people can feel good about themselves, authentically, how can anyone say no to that?

We hear a lot about the word inclusivity — what does that mean to you?

If you take out the buzzword from it, it's essentially allowing people to be their authentic selves. It's allowing people to show up as themselves without negative consequences or repercussions.

What advice do you have for other young brands hoping to grow their business?

First, you need a purpose. There isn't necessarily a handbook for success, so all your guides are your values and purpose. Your purpose will guide you through tough business positions. Back in the day when you thought about starting a business, you would follow the four P's — product, price, promotion, place. I believe that there is a fifth 'P', which is purpose. If you get this right, everything else will fall into place. In this new age of founders, the fifth 'P' is what can make or break a brand.