

## Top Takeaways from Day 1 of Magic 2017



MAGIC Recharging Station, 2017;  
Source: FGRT

The FGRT team is in Las Vegas this week attending the Magic conference, which covers the men’s, women’s and children’s apparel, accessories and footwear markets. Here, we share our top takeaways from the event.

- 1) Retail isn’t dead, it’s just very different!
- 2) Consumers are buying stories more than brands.
- 3) Fashion needs new brands that are unique and differentiated.
- 4) Networking and maintaining one’s reputation are key to building a business.
- 5) Building a profitable fashion business requires organization and planning.

### 1. Retail Isn’t Dead, It’s Just Very Different!

This session was part of the National Shoe Retailers Association’s (NSRA) education conference, and the speaker was James Dion, Founder and President of Chicago-based Dionco Inc. Dion is also an internationally-known speaker, retail consultant and author.

Dion began his remarks with a quote from a Walmart COO as saying there has never been a more disruptive time in the history of retail, however, there is no going back—we can only go forward. He then delivered a presentation titled, “Doom and Gloom,” in which he discussed the numerous disruptive factors, including store closings, desperate actions by department stores, e-commerce, an overmalled US, discount stores, a shrinking middle class, pressure by suppliers and consumers’ changing pressures as contributing factors.

Dion then introduced Retail 3.0, which includes offering food and beverage in combination with apparel, saving consumers’ attention through intelligent advertising, seizing attention through authentic stores and the mind shift required to leverage

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technology such as augmented reality (AR). He forecasts that future stores will occupy smaller spaces and will serve as showrooms, fitting rooms or drop-off points.

Finally, on a positive note, Dion noted that millennials and Gen Zers prefer visiting physical stores and that consumer spending remains healthy.

**2. Consumers Are Buying Stories More Than Brands**

Consumers today are interested in the storytelling and the image behind the brands. Retailers on Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter are using visual storytelling to sell their brands using carefully curated content. These videos and images reinforce the brand’s mission while engaging consumers.

Mercedes Gonzalez, Director, Global Purchasing Companies, a fashion strategy and brand development agency, said that creating an emotional connection with the consumer is key to brand building, particularly on social media. Brands are inspirational and are speaking to who the customer wants to be, and not who the customer is now. Gonzalez emphasized that brands should splurge on good photography, because having great product photographs helps to create an emotional connection through “mood shots.” Quality images create brand energy, mystery, or ambience. She highlighted that through the use of photography, brands can show very little of the actual product, but still convey strong feelings that reflect a point of view that consumers are looking for. Gonzalez said that brands should use consistent messaging across all platforms—line sheets, social media and websites—for brand continuity and cohesiveness.

**3. Fashion Needs New Brands That Are Unique and Differentiated**

Panelists emphasized the need for a fashion point of view. During the session, “Looking at The Future of Creating a Brand and Getting it to Market,” panelists advised new designers to have an opinion and just do it.



*Looking at the Future of Creating a Brand and Getting It To Market; Source: FGRT*

Dov Charney, CEO, Los Angeles Apparel, said, “Fashion is elitist. It is not a democracy.” He said that he rejects fast fashion and calls it “fast garbage.” Charney said that designers should have an opinion in fashion, stick to it and should not be afraid. He added, “If you do not have an opinion, then you are nowhere.” The panelists discussed the importance of not getting stuck on perfection, and just getting out there and producing, because the retail market today is hungry for products that are unique or have a point of view.



*Looking at the Future of Creating a Brand and Getting It To Market; Dov Charney, CEO, Los Angeles Apparel, Deanna Hodges, Founder Yonduur, Anthony Bergin, Founder, Lumberunion, Source: FGRT*

Anthony Bergin, from Lumber Union suggested that brands need a secret sauce, something unique that is not a fad and that one can call their own. He said that he built his own unique brand, a unisex apparel and accessories company based in Seattle, with a mission to build a culture of collaboration “for the greater good through our people, our fashion, our supply chain and our environmental impact.” He said he wanted to build a brand with the point of view that was by-the-people, for-the-people. Lumber Union’s clothing is manufactured in the US, and the company has partnered with American Forests to plant trees for each fashion purchase to build a fashion forest. According to Bergin, the company has planted 7,200 trees to date.

**4. Networking and Maintaining One’s Reputation Are Key to Building a Business**

Key building blocks for building a business are maintaining a good reputation and networking. Mercedes Gonzalez, Director, Global Purchasing Companies, said, “Protect your reputation with your life.” Later in the afternoon, Deanna Hodges, Founder, Yonduur, an e-commerce site dedicated to overstock inventory, reiterated the importance of keeping a good reputation. She added that when she was starting her e-commerce site, she learned that she needed over \$100,000 to get started. Although she was able to incrementally fund her business, she valued the importance of her network. She recommends to new designers to get out, go to as many events as possible, and learn and listen to as many people in the industry as one can. She said, “Introduce yourself. You never know who is sitting next to you.”

**5. Building a Profitable Fashion Business Requires Organization and Planning**

Anna Livermore, Founder and President, V. Mora, a fashion business and production consulting company that works one on one with independent designers, offering hands-on help with everything from pattern making to sourcing to production management and marketing was the speaker. Livermore said she started her career as a buyer, learned to sew, design patterns and has been through the entire design process.

The presentation was essentially a to-do list for budding apparel designers. She offered a sequence of items to check off, centered on determining the collection, developing a timeline, making sketches, finding a size chart, creating labels, logos and tags, and estimating the cost of the garment.

Once the pattern is created, there is an iterative process of making the prototype, working with a fit model and making alterations until the design is set. The tech pack contains the instructions for manufacturing, and the marker is the pattern that determines how the pieces are cut from the fabric. Finally, there are the steps of production and, just as important, supervising production.

Livermore urged budding designers to not let the fear of mistakes hold them back from pressing forward.



*Anna Livermore, Founder of V. MORA Consulting and Production  
Source: FGRT*



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