



WHAT'S NEXT IN LUXURY?

Speakers at The New York Times International Luxury Conference describe the challenges facing the industry

The greatest challenge will be keeping up with the rapid pace of change in new retail technologies, which will enable luxury brands to engage their consumers in new and innovative ways.

Michael Evans, president, Alibaba

Nike's greatest opportunity is to leverage emerging technologies and data-driven craft to forge a new vision of bespoke — one where all athletes are able to collaborate directly with Nike to solve their discrete problems, however big or small.

John R. Hoke III, chief design officer, Nike

The greatest challenge for the next five years will be redefining what it means to be a true luxury brand.

Cindy Chao, jewelry designer, Hong Kong

Experience alone will not be enough in luxury — it's fleeting, an overused word, and everything can be seen as an experience.

Adrian Cheng, founder of the museum-retail mall K11 in Hong Kong and executive vice chairman, New World Development

The path to purchase is not linear, and luxury brands will have to continue to adapt and meet consumers wherever they are and how they expect to engage.

Patrice Louvet, chief executive, Ralph Lauren

Brands have given ethical manufacturing a lot of lip service for many years, but now the pressure for action and complete transparency is growing.

Joann Cheng, chairwoman, Fosun Fashion Group, and chairwoman, Lanvin

Technology will be the biggest disrupter in the luxury industry. From design to consumption, it will all need fresh wiring. And most importantly, the future is here, sooner than we think.

Darshan Mehta, president and chief executive, Reliance Brands, which has more than 50 brand partnerships in India

What's important to me is to create something with emotional resonance, something that you wear for the first time and it just feels like it belongs to you, an almost inexplicable bond.

Dennis Chan, founder and creative director of the fine-jewelry brand Qeelin

Luxury brands will need to reinvent their model of store-based retail delivery. Every physical contact with a brand will need to be one of flagship quality.

Scott Malkin, chairman, Value Retail, which specializes in luxury outlet shopping villages

Biggest challenge in next five years: global recession driven by a slowdown in China and withdrawal of central bank support in the United States and Europe.

Steve Hasker, chief executive, Creative Artists Agency Global

As the technology of delivering information over the internet progresses, retailers of luxury goods need to embrace techniques that allow them to both educate and motivate the customer as well as to enhance the convenience of the online shopping experience.

Bruce Jones, chief executive, Triton



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The Center of Excellence also aims at promoting a responsible vision regarding know-how and the art of French living, with the deep conviction that luxury is based on the marriage between tradition and modernity.

ESSEC programs expertise in global luxury value chain, blending heritage and modernity

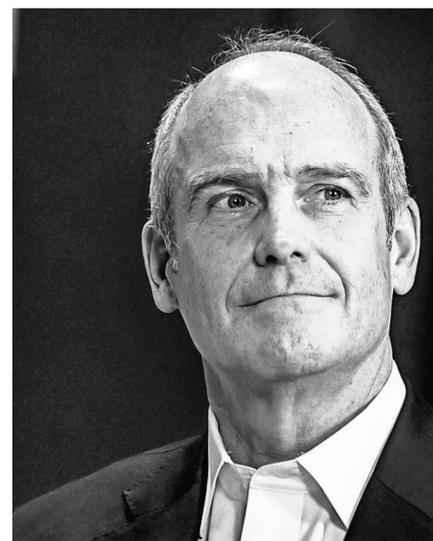
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The pioneering spirit

CORNER OFFICE

Michael Evans of Alibaba

The president on Singles Day and Olympic rowing



JEAN CHUNG/BLOOMBERG, VIA GETTY IMAGES

Golden boy
Michael Evans, president of Alibaba Group, led his firm to record Singles Day purchases earlier this month.

BY DAVID GELLES

Nov. 11 was Singles Day in China, the unofficial national celebration of shopping. And once again Alibaba posted record numbers. The Chinese e-commerce site sold \$1 billion in goods in the first 85 seconds, almost \$31 billion by the time the day was over, and sent more than 1 billion packages out for delivery.

Michael Evans, a former banker originally from Canada, was responsible for overseeing much of those efforts. As president of Alibaba, Mr. Evans works closely with Jack Ma, the company's co-founder and outgoing chairman, and Daniel Zhang, its chief executive officer. He first got to know Alibaba while working for Goldman Sachs, where he was head of Asia before leaving the firm at the end of 2013. He joined Alibaba in 2015.

Mr. Evans grew up in Toronto with five siblings, including a twin brother, Mark. The twins would go on to join the Canadian Olympic team, which won a gold medal in rowing at the 1984 Summer Games in Los Angeles.

This interview, which was condensed and edited for clarity, was conducted Nov. 12 at The New York Times International Luxury Conference in Hong Kong.

When did you start rowing with your

brother?

There was a little bit too much competition when we were young. My parents sort of purposely kept us out of the same schools. But then we started rowing together in my junior year at Princeton to train for the world championships. This was two years before the '84 Olympics.

How was that, rowing with the twin you'd been so competitive with?

When it came to race day, our heads were always aligned. Our real focus was to beat the other crew, not to beat ourselves. And we were in a boat of eight. The whole crew had to be aligned and focused on the mission.

And then you had a good Olympic Games.

Yeah, we won. It doesn't get better than that.

What was your first job out of college?

Keeping consistent with what my parents had done, my brother and I didn't want to join the same investment bank. He went to Goldman and I went to Salomon Brothers.

You eventually got to Goldman, too.

I was recruited by John Thornton (the former president of Goldman Sachs), who tried to recruit me many times to come over, then finally succeeded. Then I spent the next 21 years there.

How was the Goldman you joined different than the Goldman you left?

At the time I joined, there were probably 100 people with us in London. There were probably 20 people in Asia. Goldman Sachs at this time was really a U.S. investment bank with remote locations. By the time I left, they had 7,000 people in London, 3,000 or 4,000 people in Asia, and they built businesses all over the world.

When did you first get to know Alibaba?

I first met Jack in 1999, and we invested \$5 million. We were one of the first. In your lifetime you might meet four or five true visionaries. Of those four or five, maybe one or two are actually able to convert it into something real. Jack was one of those guys.

So how did you wind up joining the company?

I left Goldman in 2013 and I started thinking about what I wanted to do. One day I got a call from Jack and he said,

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