

Karen Lowe

Head of Buying. Lifestyle Brands. Transformational Leader.

📍 Market Harborough LE16, UK

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Languages

English

About

ABOUT KAREN

BRANDS WORKED WITH



Experience



- **Head of Buying**

Joules | Sep 2019 - Nov 2022

- **HEAD OF BUYING**

Avon | Jan 2015 - Aug 2019

AVON HEAD OF BUYING 2015 - 2019 Led a Buying team to develop diverse and commercial ranges for the EMEA region with sales total of \$150m per year Maximising growth opportunities alongside a deliverable and robust 3 year plan while ensuring department strategies support the global plan Managing the supplier base while on boarding new sourcing locations was a key priority to ensure delivery of keen cost price targets and margin The structure had no design team and my extended accountability was to deliver the palettes and design themes, to pull out key outfits and story executions across all categories and brief to marketing Developed a close partnership with the creative team – how the product should be styled and shot and creating strong digital content that can be used on social media to help elevate the brand Key Achievements Promoted to Head of Buying after 10 months in role Delivered substantial growth on new segments - in particular Home Fragrance Promoted to Head of Buying overseeing the struggling Apparel, Lingerie & Nightwear category, with revenues in excess twice that of the Home Category Created a successful departmental vision and strategy to reset failing areas back to growth and greater profitability Only Buying Manager selected for fast-track internal training programme Successfully launched a new Lingerie collection – targeted as a \$100m global initiative Big focus on sourcing from a global perspective to drive quality and margin in a particularly price sensitive market and opening up new low-cost product routes from Bangladesh delivering high quality product at excellent margins



- **SENIOR BUYER**

Next | Jan 2005 - Jan 2014

Working across many areas of the Home department. Largest area of responsibility of sales of £65million per year with 3 direct reports. Developing close relationship with Merchandisers, Technologists and Designers to deliver a commercial and fit for purpose product range to market, supported with robust critical path management. Sourcing was through European, Indian and the Far East – varied due to the product areas within Home. Key accountability to deliver target margin through negotiation, engineering of product and E auctions. Supplier/factory visits to ensure compliance and code of practise is upheld Good, better and best pricing architecture Understand the customer better through market research and store visits Managing design to ensure a commercial and exciting range is delivered Understand product costs and how to engineer to key price points Work with Technologist to deliver new and innovative products Successful selection meetings to sign off product with Managers and Director Brief marketing team to deliver a cohesive brand in retail through packaging Plan Next Directory pages with team, brief styling/layout and sign off shots and copy Brief E Commerce team to deliver clear Internet spreads Key Achievements Delivering substantial sales increases in a difficult trading environment (£3million on home accessories and £1million on bathroom accessories) Delivering margin increases against declining dollar rate and freight increases Motivating teams with poor morale to work effectively and to the same goal Mentoring and developing Trainee and Assistant buyers through to promotion Introduced key Brands to Ecom that contributed £1million extra sales in 1st year Won Best Buyer and Best Team award



- **Trainee Buyer | Assistant Buyer**

Marks and Spencer | Jan 2000 - Jan 2005

Lingerie and Nightwear Head of Buying Home Decor and Gifting 2015 - 2019 Junior Buyer Lingerie 2000 - 2005 Trainee Buyer Assistant Buyer 1996 - 2000

- **JUNIOR BUYER**

Marks & Spencer | Jan 2000 - Jan 2005

Buying various categories of Lingerie, progressing from Assistant Buyer to Junior Buyer. Largest area of responsibility totalling £40 million per year. Key focus on sustaining no.1 market share place, while identifying gaps in the range to grow and sustain market share. Working alongside technologists on fit was paramount as well as working closely with the design team to ensure a commercial, balanced range across price points. Re sourcing of volume lines with risk evaluation on supply chain to ensure continuous supply with improved margin with full-service vendors and direct suppliers. Engineering product to price points and margin targets was imperative in a market where fast fashion retailers and supermarkets were beginning to gain market share in Lingerie. Working alongside the Merchandisers to analyse weekly trade and seasonal sales data to help inform future strategies and presenting back to the Director of Lingerie at key critical path meetings. Key Achievements Gained a 5% increase on like for like sales in a difficult trading climate Challenged supply base to improve product quality and design of bestselling range while maintaining the margin. This resulted in a 40% increase in sales Market share growth on key range Major contributor in project to evaluate current supply base and future buying strategy for Lingerie