

2022

TOP WOMEN IN RETAIL

Women in Retail
Leadership Circle's
12th Annual Report
of the Leading
Female Executives
in Retail

SPONSORED BY





MARIANNE THOMPSON

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MERCHANDISE, HOME HARDWARE STORES LIMITED

What's your proudest professional accomplishment of the past year?

Working with the merchandise team to deliver on their objectives and provide support to our close to 1,100 independent Home Hardware Dealers' owners during a very challenging year for retail. Home Hardware's merchandise team navigated supply chain issues and other challenges related to the global pandemic with agility and resilience. Despite all of the obstacles, our team achieved a record year.

Describe a risk you've taken in your career and how it paid off.

When I arrived at Home Hardware, I knew I wanted to implement a new business strategy for merchandise. I had a vision of what that would look like and how it should be executed. I developed a plan and presented it to shareholders, knowing I would have to make a strong case for why the company should pivot from the legacy plan it currently had in place. I'm pleased to say this new strategy successfully overachieved our objectives for the first three years.

How do you motivate and inspire your team?

Empowering my team is key. We always align on objectives and priorities, but I give them the freedom to determine the best way forward to meet their goals. I'm a strong believer that when you lead through coaching, you not only motivate your team, you also give them room to grow and recognize their own strengths. I'm not here to tell them how to do their jobs — they already know the answers to many of the challenges they face. My role is to make sure they understand the broader vision and ensure they have all the tools they need to be successful. I also encourage them to take risks and make sure they know I will have their back no matter the outcome. Every risk we take, we take as a team.

How do you advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion in your workplace?

Home Hardware has an incredible workplace culture committed to promoting an inclusive, open and respectful environment where everyone feels comfortable to bring their authentic selves to work. I've made it my mission to champion

our company's D&I efforts and the key learnings I have uncovered through Home's unconscious bias training.

As a female who has spent her entire career in what has traditionally been a male-dominated industry, creating an environment where everyone feels comfortable to contribute openly and safely is important to me. It's something I strive to achieve in both my day-to-day work life and hiring practices. I'm currently mentoring five women within my organization and strive to support, encourage and empower them in any way I can.

What should companies do to attract and retain more female talent?

I'm a firm believer that an organization needs to lead by example. If a company wants to attract and retain female talent, it needs to support, promote and encourage females within all levels of the organization. Creating growth opportunities for women in the workplace and encouraging them to apply for these opportunities is an important part of promoting equity in the workplace.

How do you recharge?

It's so important to maintain work-life balance by recharging — which I do in multiple ways. I love spending quality time with family and enjoy vacationing with friends. In the winter, one of my favorite things to do is go tobogganing or skating with my grandson. In the summer, you can find me relaxing by the lake, reading a book on the deck. I also de-stress and recharge by going for a run or simply taking a bath and listening to music.





JESSICA KUEPFER



COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR, HOME HARDWARE STORES LIMITED

What do you love about working in retail?

I love the innovation and constant evolution of retail. It's so fulfilling to have a career where you're constantly learning and being challenged.

What skills have been instrumental in your career development?

I'm going to focus on soft skills for this one — curiosity, strong communication, positivity, courage and collaboration.

What role has mentorship played in your career?

You can't rise without lifting others. I'm fortunate to have many remarkable mentors who have spent time helping me level up in my life and career. I've also had the great pleasure of returning the favor and mentoring some very special people. I've learned and grown equally from those who mentor me and those I mentor.

What's one thing you want to spend more time doing in 2022, and one thing you want to spend less time doing, personally or professionally?

As leaders, we're responsible for helping our teams reach their potential. I want to spend even more time in 2022 focusing on health and wellness. I don't think it's possible to overemphasize creating systems and habits that help everyone thrive.

Something I don't want to spend any time on in 2022, both personally and professionally, is thinking something isn't possible.

