Pimkie’s CEO Béatrice Lafon setting up senior management team with international outlook

By Anaïs Lerévérend - 20 March 2019

Internationalisation is clearly the key word in the strategy introduced by Béatrice Lafon at Pimkie. The new CEO of the French womenswear retailer owned by the Mulliez group (part of the Fashion3 group of brands) took charge in the last few weeks of 2018, and has recently announced the creation of a new senior executive team. It relies on two managers already in place, and above all on three new arrivals with international experience.

Lafon herself, who is French but settled in the UK, spent most of her career outside France, until she was appointed CEO of Claire’s, and is keen to inject the same outlook in the members of her executive team, the leaders of Pimkie's operational departments. Alongside Pierre-Yves Guislain, ‘finance leader’ since January 2018, and Emilie Vermersch, in charge of the product range since the end of 2017, three new managers will soon be joining Pimkie.

The first will be Patrick Van Der Linden, who in summer is set to become ‘customer leader’ for the womenswear retailer. Holland-born Van Der Linden, 50, notably worked for 15 years at German retailer MediaMarktSaturn, both in the Netherlands and China, and will lead the department looking after Pimkie’s clientèle. He will oversee the stores' staff, the retail partners and the marketing and digital teams, in other words all those who are in direct contact with Pimkie’s consumer target of 15-25 year-olds.

The second new arrival is Michael Olson. Lafon knows the 47-year-old American well, since he spent 7 years at Claire’s, most recently as global VP planning, supply chain and logistics, after a long stint at Abercrombie & Fitch. Olson will take on the role of ‘leader merchandising’ at Pimkie, in charge of managing product stocks and their flow.

The third appointment announced by Pimkie on March 19 is that of Nikki Rolph as Chief Happiness Officer. The British manager will play a crucial role for the company, which recently cut 200 jobs and closed down some forty stores, and has similar plans in place outside France too, in Germany and more recently in Spain. Rolph worked at Claire’s, where she set up the international HR department, as well as at Marionnaud and Missguided. At Pimkie’s, she will oversee HR, payroll management, training, internal communications and CSR at an international level.

Pimkie’s new, highly globalised governance approach seems to be relying less on geographical segmentation. A few weeks ago however, Clément Dhier, formerly in charge of Spain and Portugal, was appointed general manager France and Benelux.
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Pimkie underlined that 53% of its revenue is generated outside the French domestic market, a share which the company intends to grow in the future. It did not disclose its 2018 revenue, though last year was once again a troubled one, after a 10% decline in 2017 which reportedly brought total sales down to about €535 million.

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