

New York Fashion Week Is Changing And This Is Why It Matters In The Marketing Landscape

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Sally LaPointe

I was an attendee of New York Fashion Week in the midst of the debate which raged on, (before, during, and after) about whether NYFW and the fashion show was indeed dead or needed to be revamped. As the topic swirled through virtually every industry interaction, the intense, somewhat dysfunctional marathon turned out to be the perfect opportunity to gather marketing lessons from big and small brands. With a record low number of shows, brands literally changed some of their plans on the fly while others were clever enough to anticipate the sea change and plan accordingly. It seemed apropos to reach out to industry expert [Cameron Silver](#), the esteemed Founder of [Decades & Fashion](#) Director of [H by Halston](#) and [H Halston](#), to distill his insights on this particularly pivotal fashion moment.

As Silver explained, “NYFW and the fashion industry in general is in an existential crisis at present. The way younger generations consume in a shared economy is ultimately providing huge challenges and fashion shows no longer engage the same way with customers. Visceral connections with fashionistas remain one of the most effective ways to create transactional relationships. Consumers want to know the creators of the items they purchase and social media has created a platform that provides transparency and access.” This observation actually dovetails into how several brands started to rethink their plans last week and going forward. By the way, it takes guts to do the unexpected. As these three major trends emerged, the net takeaway is: what's happening within the fashion world also applies to brands everywhere.



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Brands Are Experimenting With Bold Changes In Their Brand Strategies

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1. **Pivot.** Just because you've always executed or participated in a certain event or done something the same way, it does not mean you should stick with it. Many brands from Monse to Alexander Wang are completely rethinking the runway show. [Monse](#) cancelled their show (even with a prime slot on the Fashion Week Calendar) and instead shot a video presentation on Coney Island, debuted it at a party they hosted (and moved to a different day hours before it was scheduled), and it now lives on via their website. Powerhouse brand [Alexander Wang](#) held their very last February runway show (and used 21 year old social media powerhouse Bella Hadid as the inspo) deciding to leave the traditional calendar behind for a move to June. This is such a bold move that it may change (actually force) the revamping of Fashion Week and the entire show calendar. Other brands from Altrazurra, Thom Browne, and Proenzer opted to take their shows to other cities. By changing your approach, this is often the best way to break

away from the pack and gain increased brand viability and notoriety. It's the old 'no guts no glory' move.

2. **Authenticity.** With so many events cancelled or attendees opting to skip shows even if they were in town because, heck, they could just watch them online versus running around New York, (with some of the biggest bloggers I know opting to stay in their hotel rooms versus attending major events), brands used the opportunity to create intimate scenarios with influencers, buyers, and the press. This ran the gamut from style suites, fashion presentations like [The Row](#) (held at their downtown studio) which were targeted to highly select guest lists, imaginative pop-up shops, and micro dinners to cocktail parties taking advantage of the fashion crowd. Depending on the brand, the strategies were tailored to what they wanted to achieve and communicate. [Naked Cashmere](#) took the opportunity for a Soho happening to make a broader line introduction while Louis Vuitton debuted an exclusive sneaker pop-up with the help of [Vogue](#). [Roland Mouret](#) even came in from London to present his new perfume line with a special performance by artist, poet, and storyteller Cleo Wade (and we actually got to know the designer in a very one-on-one setting). All of these events were intended to build more authentic consumer connections in less manufactured environments.

Cameron Silver expounded on the trend saying “Opportunities for designers to interact with their customers” reminded him “of when Bill Blass would travel the country doing trunk shows in the 1960s and 70s. Ardent Blass fans had a visceral connection to the designer and loyalty was solidified. Today’s designers and brands must personally attend to their clients which will result in strong bonds. Consumer interface can be both physical and digital, but it has to be honest and emotional.” No wonder major online brands are trying to get in front of their customers in small venues, exploring loyalty programs, and adapting a trunk show approach to build their top tier clients. Consumers want to feel important to brands. They are, after all the true influencers.



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Getting Back To Authenticate Consumer Engagement Is The New Marketing Mantra

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3. **Engagement.** Brands need to start thinking seriously about how to reconnect and stay connected to their top tier clients and the fashion industry is starting to heed this wake-up call. How to do it? Cameron “encourages marketing dollars allocated to events with top and potential clients, especially in regions represented by smaller independent brick and mortar stores that serve fashion-loving communities outside of major metropolitan cities.” I know several brands starting to kick off programs such as these and they are seeing significant results. However, none of this works unless, as Silver told me, “at the end of the day it’s about the product, being at the right price, presented in the right place. You can have the most over the top fashion show or exciting after party or in-store event, but if the customer isn’t moved by the design and doesn’t see value in ownership, there are a million other tempting distractions to grab those dollars.” I actually saw this come to life at the [Sally LaPointe](#) show

last week. The designer had always grappled with how to bring in a bolder color palette into her work. She did just that last week and hit a new level of engagement across multiple platforms. That's what happens when you listen to you target audience.

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Ultimately creativity isn't just about what happens on the runway. It's about how you engage the consumer in the total brand experience. It seems like the fashion world is suddenly getting back to some of the basics. Now that's a fashion statement.

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