

# Pivot Perfect

*A Thought Leadership Q&A Series by The Brownstone Group*

## Patrick Bousquet-Chavanne: **It's an Art – Connecting Marketing, Branding and Technology**

Patrick Bousquet-Chavanne, President & Chief Executive Officer, Americas, and Global Head of the Luxury Practice at ESW (formerly eShopWorld) is known for being a transformational leader possessing a proven record in digital innovation, customer experience, global brand development, and international strategy. His earlier background with other well-known global brands included EMAAR Malls PJSC, owner of The Dubai Mall, and Marks and Spencer PLC. Patrick's tenure also includes working within the beauty, cosmetic, and fragrances industry with The Estee Lauder Companies, Parfums Christian Dior at LVMH, and Elizabeth Arden spanning e-commerce, retail and wholesale globally is immense. Additionally, Patrick has served as a Board Member actively participating with Brown-Forman, Flow Water, HSNi, Purdue University, Prince's Trust to name a few.



The Brownstone Group's Tim Boerkoel had the pleasure of spending time with Patrick to converse about Patrick's professional observations of the aspirational and luxury industry. His background began in marketing, product development, and sales, as well as shifted into the emerging intersections of global commerce over the past 20 years. We believe that Patrick's unique and well-rounded background will be insightful and inspiring.

**Timothy Boerkoel (TB):** Your experiences have maintained a foothold in the marketing and branding side of businesses with your understanding and vision for technology driving growth; is this a result of personal interest and passion for those capacities or just necessity? Share with us how your interests and skillset have played a role in your career path.

**Patrick Bousquet-Chavanne (PBC):** I like this question very much! The way I look at life in general, is a blend of "passion points", the things that you intuitively do extremely well with because you are passionate about them. There is an everyday learning that fuels your passion. Right next to the passion points are those areas that you may not have an interest in initially, but a necessity, and the need to evolve yourself and transform drive the interest. It is definitely a harder muscle to exercise because it doesn't come naturally, but if you are

curious, then those areas of necessity begin to convert to new passions. This describes my personal relationship between marketing, branding, and technology. For the greater part of my career, I have been involved in marketing and branding and it has been intuitive. At the same time, I have had to exercise the deep, thirstful desire for knowledge on the technology side that over the past 15 years has been the driving force in my personal development.

As I reflect on the emergence of technology, there were a couple of pivotal moments, making me realize it's importance and the need to throw myself at it in order to stay relevant, along with having an inquisitive nature. Especially with two millennial daughters at home, I could see early on that technology was not a question for that generation, just a way of life with their use of social commerce and social media. Just conversing around the dinner table, which is a very important ritual for our family,

THE BROWNSTONE GROUP

*Finding Talent. Building Businesses.*

[www.thebrownstonegroup.com](http://www.thebrownstonegroup.com)

it became quite powerful and offered a bounty of advice.

A little more than 20 years ago, I was part of the team at Estee Lauder when we acquired Gloss.com. They quickly succeeded in this market, exploding the e-comm business in the beauty space. The company was celebrating one million registered online users and realized what a momentous time it was as consumer behavior was changing, and the beauty industry that would follow would be very different. Who knew it would be what it is today? I recall this vividly as an extraordinary moment for me and an indication that traditional retail was shifting, and I along with it.

Later, when I took the deep dive to run a digital business at Marks and Spencer PLC, that was a proof-point time in my career - with the urge to succeed, to transform the business culturally, and to adapt to technology's impact to consumer engagement in retail. That was transformative for me, a forceful moment. It has been my "red thread" – to be fully aware of technology and to learn from it every day. That explains a little of the personal balance that I've created in technology and branding.

Those who know me, understand how deep my interests lie in global branding, product development, and marketing. I'm avidly curious in understanding consumer behavior – why consumers adopt certain positions, understanding the complex problematics, and finding solutions to consumer questions – when you go where others may not venture ... that is when value is created.

I've discovered the importance of being a culturally hybrid person – good at marketing with an appreciation for diversity. It is critical to take in the different points of view, see the various shades of gray, and learn from the nuances every day. My education began in International Marketing in France where I developed the cultural side of marketing. I then built upon this through the Quantitative Marketing Program at Purdue University, which developed my numbers discipline and analytics which is critical today. The understanding of the technical side of business enables so much – from revealing how the consumer

interfaces to opening up possibilities for the brand. It's really about the consumer experience and understanding what makes it a positive one. It is this awareness that truly matters.

**TB: You have experienced and stated the need for brand awareness to exist in a market in order for it to grow, and the importance of trust when building brand equity – how has the process for building trust and brands evolved as the retail world shifts to e-commerce-centric?**

**PBC:** Fundamentally, the e-commerce world today offers multiple touchpoints for consumers to engage with brands – consumers don't think in terms of channels, but of the totality of the "feeling" they have when engaged with a brand. There are three cornerstones – convenience, trust, and speed. We've all become impatient creatures, and I am one of those creatures. We evaluate convenience quickly, asking "does it help my life or doesn't it" as many of us journey through life feeling time deprived. Trust is the key cornerstone that provides consumers with the signals in the totality of the brand; and transparency creates trustworthy experiences regardless of the platform. This is powerful – it leads to a strong sense of brand loyalty over time as a brand keeps reinforcing the notion of trust, creating a sense of comfort for the consumer.

Another important aspect when building brand awareness is the principle that "demand must precede supply." For me, this came from the "school of Leonard Lauder" of Estee Lauder, Inc. – he was a mentor of mine with an unequalled ability to transfer knowledge. I learned this concept of demand and supply originally when I was in college but applied it at Estee Lauder. You just don't realize the merit of the principle until you begin to apply it. Brand awareness is essential in creating the initial demand – it must be earned and built, especially in the luxury sector. Bernard Arnault was a mentor while I was with the Christian Dior Division of LVMH. He shared his intuitive knowledge and understanding of the luxury industry, which still inspires me today. The notion of rarity is what great brands trade on, creating aspiration and cultivating this powerful motivator for consumers – building trust, convenience, and uniquely creating their own awareness. I'm thinking of Chanel, Hermes, and La

Mer – they have achieved the fine balance of achieving awareness and wide distribution while maintaining the strong aspirational values that shape their brand. It is a mosaic, and it is a challenging task.

**TB: Direct to Consumer (DTC) strategies have many complexities, especially when launched globally. They require a “forecasting model” that is multi-faceted and can change in a flash – such as recognizing current market conditions and direction; consumer thinking; and the competitor landscape. Forecasting seems almost an innate sense in you, where does that come from?**

**PBC:** There is a strong part of me that enjoys learning from history and understanding why things happen in a certain way. Events repeat themselves, especially in retail, and with a different magnitude because they are consumer-led. From one generation to the next, we watch a group of consumers moving in a certain direction. COVID was probably the exception to events repeating themselves – no one would have predicted that the entire physical retail world would shut down. Normally, we pull from past experiences to help navigate in the present time. You surround yourself with bright people that help you make the right calls - this definitely improves one’s forecasting ability. You must also be intuitive, sensing the consumer’s mindset and having an ear on both the physical and digital high street. The two streets complement each other in so many ways - creating an osmosis between the different channels ... and the data proves it every day. Consumers either embrace or reject the totality of the brand, depending on culture, values, what’s in it for them, and the type of relationship they want – they don’t think of the different channels, just the brand as a whole.

If you have the propensity to take all the things you’ve learned, make the effort to see why things

happen a certain way, you just naturally become better. Better at facing the next situation, able to appreciate it, capable of understanding its challenges, and hopefully develop a solution for it.

One thing I have discovered over the past ten years from the online world – that it clearly is a world of daily, even hourly optimization. You look at the

data, and you adjust as you go. The journey is never finished, and your forecast becomes more accurate as you keep learning and fueling it. That is kind of what life is all about. You just become better at it as you face different experiences that enrich you with knowledge and prepare you for what comes next. You need to maintain an awareness and an ability to react rapidly to potential change. The forecasting intuition is critical.

Anticipation and preparedness are expected from a senior operator today – the ability to shed some light on what might happen with a certain set of variables or circumstances, and from experience and insight play that out in front of a group of smart people – all with only days or even hours to respond in this consumer-driven market that demands speed. The Ukraine situation poses a definite threat on global commerce, we cannot sit by and wait to let it all play out to determine how we might respond. You must somehow develop your own thesis and remain prepared to respond to what unfolds. It is a process of nourishing your thoughts with learnings from past events and making decisions to the best of your abilities for the future.

**TB: It seems an opposing force - to be building brands internationally and localizing the customer experience – however, to be successful in global e-commerce, one must deeply understand the local customer experience. Tell us about this delicate balance.**

**PBC:** It is definitely a delicate balance – always trying to find the right equilibrium. Between transporting your brand globally and delivering an experience that feels local to the customer, all without changing or disrupting what makes your brand unique – it’s a balancing act. This is what I’ve practiced all my life in many different positions and what I truly enjoy. There is no universal solution - each brand finds their own equilibrium in their journey.

At ESW (formerly e-ShopWorld), I feel very passionate about our vision to sell global and feel local. How do we live by it? I’m convinced because I have seen mistakes made, that you do not change your DNA. I’d rather make the decision to not venture into a particular market rather than de-

nature the brand culture or proposition in order to fit - always a recipe for “not great success.” My mantra - stay on DNA, understand your culture, and value proposition, and then (although hard) you have to travel on brand. If you really understand the unique personality of a brand, you will find your “tribe” of consumers similar to the one in your home market. Consumer behaviors around the world are amazingly consistent if drilled down below the surface. And although size may not be the same, brands will find equivalencies in global markets. By localizing the experience for the consumer, behaving like you are part of their local community, understanding how they shop online and the local payment methods they are accustomed to, you will be successful.

I’ve had the experience of seeing multiple examples of retailers trying to navigate international waters with a one-size-fits-all approach – this just creates challenges because the answer is generally in the local nuances, especially in this age of intense and overall desire for personalization. We see it happening globally, led by the Gen Z and millennial generations. It is so important for everyone in retail to understand those nuances in localizing the experience.

It's been interesting to observe multiple situations where consumers actually “leap-frog” one technology for another. Mobile e-commerce over-penetrates in some markets because of the deficit of other technologies and the younger generation adopting the technology much faster, making mobile technology the dominant shopping format. China is the premiere example with consumers buying from the feed directly and from multiple platforms because there was such a structural deficit in retail access in that market. Technology led this group of consumers to buy via apps – as they continually seek convenience and were born with digital devices in their hands.

**TB: Just as diversification across one’s investments provides strength, to diversify your personal brand ensures growth and longevity. Your resume is diverse in industry and positions, c-suite capacities, and board roles. Can you enlighten us around your desire to share your**

**expertise and time on so many boards and the impact that has made?**

**PBC:** Diversification of skills and learning experiences is essential in life, you must continuously renew. If you have a curious nature that will feed into this, however, there must be a “red thread” running through your capabilities to make the most impact. I feel like perhaps this question is better asked to the boards I have had the pleasure to serve. As for me, serving on boards is part of the same journey - one of continuous learnings, evolution and improvement, an imperative for me to stay relevant in my art. My art too has changed, and I’ve continued to adapt as a person as I see the world evolve around me.

Contributing to boards and sharing expertise with senior colleagues has had a meaningful impact on my personal growth – it has fueled longevity, freshness of mind and thinking, and my continued desire to make an impact. This is what I call legacy, leading me to the different steps of my career... some steps came with a substantial question before I made the move as you always take a degree of risk when considering a change, questioning whether you are able to mitigate this risk and knowing it is very personal. When you decide the risk is worth taking, you pivot – and the reward is on the learning side as you move forward. When you face these moments head-on, they are the moments that truly enrich you in life.

I recall Arthur Martinez, from Saks Fifth Avenue and Sears Corporation as a mentor in terms of board governance. He mastered the art of navigating challenging board topics and always finding unanimous resolutions, and I’ve carried that with me on my journey. I have held some board positions for many years - over 17 years on the Brown-Forman, Inc. Board, soon exceeding my shelf-life; six years at Marks and Spencer (M&S), and five years at HSN. I best apply my art in the consumer goods and retail industries. Serving on these boards has allowed me to share in the digital transformation journey of these companies – helping them navigate the transformative world of global retail with the tremendous influence of technology, helping them anticipate, plan for, and strategize around those

challenges. This I am passionate about and truly enjoy!

Another “red thread” is the urge for personal development. I enjoy fast-paced environments – the thrill; I like to win, and to help others win, and I like a challenge with big dreams. We all need a moonshot. There is nothing more powerful and satisfying when you make it happen. My career is a continuous path – what an adventure to run an organization and lead great people to the moonshot.

### About The Brownstone Group

*The Brownstone Group was launched in 2015 with a mission to offer the most effective executive search, strategic consulting and leadership advisory services. We introduce exceptional talent to brands and their leaders, transforming businesses and careers. Founder Tim Boerkoel possesses more than 25 years of retail, consumer, hospitality and luxury experience, advising and recruiting for startups and global corporations alike in their searches for CEOs, Presidents, Board Members and C-Suite talent. Brownstone, along with its global network of affiliate partners, operates as a true partner to clients ensuring swift yet long-lasting results.*

© 2022 The Brownstone Group. All Rights Reserved.

THE BROWNSTONE GROUP

*Finding Talent. Building Businesses.*

[www.thebrownstonegroup.com](http://www.thebrownstonegroup.com)