

Attuned to Attitude Adjustments

Wendy Liebmann

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Wendy Liebmann has been helping clients create high-impact marketing strategies for nearly a quarter of a century. Last year marked the 20th anniversary of *How America Shops*, a collection of reports Liebmann oversees devoted to American consumers' changing behavior and attitudes toward where and how they shop.

Her findings make their way into *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Business Week*, and the Australian native also makes frequent TV appearances to provide insight into the state of retailing and consumer shopping trends.

WSL clients include Boots, Charming Shoppes/Lane Bryant, CVS, J.C. Penney, Saks Fifth Avenue, Sainsbury's and Target.

What was your first paying job?

I worked for Total, the French oil company, as a marketing assistant in my final year at university (Liebmann holds a degree in business and psychology from the University of New South Wales). I later worked as a market researcher at Foresearch, a Sydney-based market research company.

Your first retail job?

I was a management trainee at Walton's Department Stores in Sydney; it lasted a short six weeks and led to a trainee revolt. After spending most of that time in the warehouse putting price stickers on merchandise I decided that was not the best way to learn retail, so I resigned. The other trainees followed shortly thereafter.

Several years later I tried retail again and it was a better fit. I worked for a company that was part of a cooperative of 2,000 Australian drug stores, where I was responsible for developing private-label products, marketing and advertising.

Do you ever have trouble being a consumer, given what you do?

Not a bit. I still react first as a shopper: It's the best perspective to have.

What's inspiring you now?

To consider what the landscape will look like over the next decade gets my heart beating and my brain firing. This is hugely exciting and motivating. We're in the midst of what will be a major transformation of U.S. retail; the "great recession" was only one factor driving the changes in shoppers, and there's no going back. So hold on — it's going to be a bumpy and yet stunningly exciting ride.



Days on the road?

About 100 annually.

Travel must-have?

I always have my music.

Influencers on your career?

My parents. My mother always encouraged me to "fly" — to try whatever I wanted to do, including leaving Australia to find "a bigger pond." My father always said, "get the facts" before you do anything. Perfect yin and yang.

Last website visited?

Facebook.

Something you'd like to accomplish personally or professionally?

Perfect my French.

Little-known fact about you?

I studied ballet for 10 years.

On your wish list?

A trip along the northwest coast of Australia.

Guilty pleasure?

Comme des Garçons clothing.

A favorite possession?

A watercolor I bought in Shanghai 12 years ago. I was on a trip with a group of retailers when I sneaked away to a gallery that had some wonderful contemporary art not usually seen in China in those days. It felt a little wicked buying it for a variety of reasons.

You could never have too many ...?

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