[00:00:01] Carina Ertl: As any marketeer on any level, you need to know what's happening within the cultural institutions, what's happening in subculture. You cannot just rely on AI to create, like, an event formula for you, because that can be copied by everyone else. So there's a huge demand on taste and creativity and implementation and execution and detailed execution that we can fulfill and that will drive us forward.

[00:00:27] Matt Britton: To thrive in a rapidly evolving landscape, brands must move at an ever increasing pace. I'm Matt Britton, Founder of Suzy. Join me and key industry leaders as we dive deep into the shifting consumer trends within their industry, why it matters now, and how you can keep up. Welcome to the Speed of Culture.

Up today on the Speed of Culture Podcast, we're thrilled to welcome Carina Ertl, the Chief Marketing Officer at Bucherer USA. Carina's career spans luxury, brand building, digital transformation, entrepreneurship, leadership experience at Swarovski, private equity backed businesses, and now Tourneau and Bucherer. Along the way, she's developed a global perspective on how heritage brands evolve, how luxury stays culturally relevant, and what strong leadership looks like.

So great to see you today. Thanks so much for joining the podcast.

[00:01:15] Carina Ertl: Thank you so much for having me. I'm really honored to be amongst all the people that you talk to. Some of my favorite persons have been on your podcast, so I'm really excited to talk to you today.

[00:01:24] Matt Britton: Awesome. Well, it's great to hear that you listen to the podcast. I find a lot of the people who are in the CMO role just like to network and stay connected to what other CMOs are doing. I would just love to hear from you to kick it off why you find podcasts like The Speed of Culture valuable and what you hope to get out of reading articles, listening to podcasts from other CMOs.

[00:01:46] Carina Ertl: Let me jump right in. I think, like, one of my key words these days is curiosity. So I feel like if you don't stay curious and you don't go out there and learn and explore and meet people and just ask questions, I feel like you are set up for failure. And this is such a great because you really curate your audience and also your guests so well, you build not just a podcast, it's like really, you build community. Right. So the people that are on your podcast I see at a conference, I see at some other events. So it's really nice because we always can get back and connect through a mutual experience.

[00:02:22] Matt Britton: Absolutely. Well, we're definitely happy to add you to the list. And of course your career has moved across journalism and private equity, and retail. In terms of being a marketer in the luxury space, do you find that there's nuances to marketing in the luxury space? And were those things that you had to learn as you've gotten on board into this role?

[00:02:43] Carina Ertl: I kind of grew up with it because my first, like bigger job was with Swarovski and that was like almost, I think over eight years of like growth and learning and just really like I spent my late 20s there almost working like 24/7. So that's really how I built my career in the early stages. And I think I just learned it. And it comes, I think for luxury especially, it's art and science, and maybe a little bit more art than science versus traditional brands or like fast moving consumer. Like I think sometimes even like classic econ, we are talking about the demand curve or like creating demand, and we are like, oh my God, but we have actually the opposite problem. We have scarcity, right. We have too much demand for not enough product that we can sell to everyone and make everyone happy. So I feel like a lot of rules are almost like reverse. And the way you approach it is definitely a little bit different.

[00:03:35] Matt Britton: And for those in the audience who don't know about Bucherer and the brands you guys sell and your target consumer, I'd love to just get some background for the audience.

[00:03:44] Carina Ertl: Of course. So we are a luxury, multi-brand retailer and we basically sell all your timepieces and watch brands, from a Rolex to Cartier, Patek Philippe, TAG Heuer, IWC. Like any watch brand that you desire, Swiss-based watch brands and then also jewelry. So we are both multi-brand timepieces and multi-brand jewelry and we span across like the globe. So we operate in Asia. We are based out of Europe since 1888. So here goes your heritage and your craftsmanship. And Bucherer acquired Tourneau back in 2018 and Tourneau is obviously very well known retailer in the United States. Now Bucherer is operating in the United States as well.

[00:04:29] Matt Britton: So that's how you pronounce it, Bucherer.

[00:04:31] Carina Ertl: There are multiple ways. It depends because we are Swiss based. So it depends which corner of Switzerland. If you're like in the German Swiss or German speaking or like the French part of Switzerland, you pronounce it slightly different. So there is no wrong or right.

[00:04:44] Matt Britton: And in terms of your business, is it all physical retail or do you also have an e-commerce presence?

[00:04:50] Carina Ertl: We have both. We also have an e-commerce presence. We have the full, like, client journey that usually still starts with, like, a digital discovery point and then obviously the retail, the physical retail spaces as well.

[00:05:02] Matt Britton: And have you found, especially in the high end watch and jewelry space, that consumers have gotten more comfortable with purchasing online, because I think

the notion maybe 15 years ago that you would spend tens of thousands of dollars on something before actually even really seeing it would have sounded crazy.

[00:05:18] Carina Ertl: Matt, you would be surprised. I mean it's obviously all about building trust. But we have some clients that only buy online with us for years because maybe they are also not part of the country where we don't have an actual physical retail store. And then we also see both where clients buy online and then go to the store. Obviously some major brands do not sell online. So some do sell online through us, others do not, because we also still want the physical experience. That's a really big part obviously in all luxury retail and luxury brands.

[00:05:50] Matt Britton: Yeah, I mean I've been in Tourneau in the US before and it is an experience. When you're buying a nice watch, they bring it out in the fancy packaging and they make sure it fits you well and you can see it on your wrist. And I can see why in this category, maybe even more than any other besides maybe automotive, where you really need to touch and feel it, but it doesn't surprise me. And of course like this particular category has also seen a booming reseller market as well because watches hold their value. And I think a lot of people don't realize that, that it's not just a purchase, it's also an investment. So talk to me about, I guess, the whole pre-owned, because I know that you also sell pre-owned product. But what's going on in that market?

[00:06:31] Carina Ertl: Certified pre-owned is, it's a huge category and I think it's so important to understand that there's a difference between, like, just any resale platform watch and then the certified pre-owned. And we have, like, a really big program that's, like, certified pre-owned. And then also I think three years ago Rolex implemented a program as well because Rolex certified pre-owned, because it's really crucial to help educate but also help the consumer understand that you want to ensure that this timepiece has been fully certified.

[00:07:02] Matt Britton: Yeah. Make sure it's real. Because I know counterfeit is a big issue in the luxury watch and luxury space overall.

[00:07:08] Carina Ertl: Absolutely. So for us it's a big segment and also one that we heavily activate because it's such an interesting and beautiful segment because you literally find timepieces that are no longer part of the actual assortment. There's a lot of history, there's a lot of storytelling. There are a lot of just beautiful, incredible pieces. So we are really honing in on creating experiences specifically around certified pre-owned.

[00:07:33] Matt Britton: One thing I've noticed about the watch space specifically is it's really kind of worked its way into pop culture. So when there's big events, I often see on Instagram just pictures of Tom Brady or like other famous celebrities, Kevin Hart, whoever, and it shows the watch that they're wearing. It shows how much it costs. And people comment on it. You have a lot of influencers and athletes and musicians, they're all showing off their watches. And I don't remember that being the case 20 years ago. And is that because of Instagram? Like, what

is driving that? Because I feel like watches are so much more prominent in pop culture than they ever were in the past.

[00:08:10] Carina Ertl: I think it's probably more visible right now through social media, but I feel it has always been a big part because it's such a big part of identity. It's, like, really a very personal purchase. It becomes part of your identity. There's always a huge milestone or some moment connected to it. Like every person that wears a watch, when I ask you about, oh, this is a beautiful timepiece, immediately there's a story connected to it. So I feel like that has just always been that way. And now obviously through social media, it just becomes more of a talking point.

[00:08:42] Matt Britton: More visible as well. But I mean, do you find that people are buying luxury watches at earlier stages in life? Because one thing Instagram does is it obviously exposes you to everyone's highlight reels. And I think when younger people who are of means, because you have to be in order to purchase one of these watches, see someone else having it, they may want it as well. But just like automobiles, I do feel like younger people are buying nicer watches now.

[00:09:07] Carina Ertl: I think it drives a sense of curiosity. So maybe there is like an earlier starting point where you come in and you start a journey of exploration and education. So that's definitely true. But at the end, it's like a shared passion, right? It's like once you really learn about timepieces, you get into the storytelling of it and through the craftsmanship, you see that this is a fully analog piece because in theory, no one really needs a watch. So it's something that you really desire and that you purchase and that is connected to a memory and storytelling. So I feel definitely like there is an earlier starting point where the exploration starts earlier.

[00:09:43] Matt Britton: And there's also a lot of parallels. Like, as you probably know, the collector's market is exploding overall. Whether it be coins or rare stamps or obviously with sports collectibles, it's kind of through the roof right now. You know, vintage baseball cards, I have a bunch here behind me. And I think the notion of like the thrill of the hunt and having something that other people don't have and limited edition fix runs, serial numbers on like all those things, I just think people love because it goes to your point of like identity. And do you find that that's a big driver and how do your brands kind of fit into that?

[00:10:16] Carina Ertl: It's really interesting because we just created an art show that was based around that notion of collecting and what drives you into collecting. And the artist is Canadian and he came from videography and just started making these collages from, like, collecting anything, like collecting books about fashion or collecting records. And he creates art pieces. And we just showed that in one of our flagship stores in New York on 57th street, because we like to curate that space as well. So we bring it back. So definitely like curation, collecting, it's all within that same framework. And the interesting part around this is that what

you started talking about is that community that builds and that creates because people have that same passion, they have the same mindset. There is maybe even an element of competition. So it's just interesting for us to be able to host and curate rooms of like minded people that just connect through a mutual passion.

[00:11:12] Matt Britton: I think it also kind of tugs on this sort of fundamental dichotomy of youth culture and consumers overall, which is like on one hand people have a need to belong. So like, if it's a brand that you love, you want to see other people that love that brand as well. Because to your point earlier, it gives you a sense of community. But people also seek out individualism. And when you can actually find your own version of that brand that maybe nobody else has, it allows you to express yourself, but also in a way that other people can kind of associate with because they also know and love the brand itself.

[00:11:45] Carina Ertl: I mean, identity and also personalization are like core pillars of luxury branding in general. And I love what you say because it's really, for me, when you say about the differentiation, I don't just see, like, if you think about a process chart, it's not just, like, product and then the next step is sale. For us, there's a whole thing in between that's product, with the product you create an experience, you build community, you build a sense of belonging and identity. And then from that comes that trust, and comes that coming back and repurchasing. So it's a really long term game, but it always adds up because it's not just short lived between product equals like sales.

[00:12:24] Matt Britton: We'll be right back with The Speed of Culture after a few words from our sponsors.

So what does marketing look like in your role? Because it's not like somebody who's marketing toothpaste or you know, a soda or deodorant. This is a high value purchase. For some people, maybe it's more of an impulse purchase. For others it's probably a big monumental part of their life or they're getting their first luxury watch. What is your go to market strategy?

[00:12:49] Carina Ertl: I think part of it is exactly what I just talked about, is that middle piece, right? That creating that experience and building community is a key part of what we do and making sure that we stay relevant. Because think about, like, us or a retailer, right? It's like you have a beautiful brand and that brand comes with all the heritage DNA with beautiful stores with a whole rebranded environment. But then at the end of the day, think about it. Compared to, like, a hotel, you may be, like, one hotel brand, let's say you are very loyal to a Four Seasons, but you might prefer, like, one property more over another property just because you really like the GM at that one property or they just remember that you like chocolate chip cookies. Just making this up. So that's the part where we really hone in. That's the part where we really differentiate ourselves. Everything else like out of home, your advertising, your communication, your PR is the same game, the digital performance, but creating that experience and making also sure you work with the right partners, not just in a sense of sponsorship like you take my

logo, I take your logo, we slam it on the same sweatshirt and now we are culturally relevant and address the next generation, but really having a strong sense of partnership of culture, that's where we differentiate ourselves.

[00:14:05] Matt Britton: And what types of channels have you found to be effective? Are you creating your own content? Are you doing a lot in social media? Have you found that more traditional media, billboards, television, et cetera is still an effective channel?

[00:14:19] Carina Ertl: I think again it comes back to the community approach. So we use all the channels. But where we are most successful if I can work with a curator who is of influence, not necessarily like an influencer, but who doesn't maybe have the 2 million followers, but who has a really strong engagement, because he's really passionate and talks authentically about timepieces and has a personal passion and has built up a community around it.

[00:14:43] Matt Britton: And his or her audience knows it.

[00:14:45] Carina Ertl: Exactly.

[00:14:46] Matt Britton: And have you been able to scale that approach?

[00:14:48] Carina Ertl: Yes, we are. I mean, obviously like it's newer so it's still, like, top subject of constant discussion and making sure it's more scalable. But it starts to, like, really be one of our strongest parts of the marketing today.

[00:15:02] Matt Britton: Yeah, for sure. And obviously the luxury buyer is all over Instagram and creators and influencers are people who just have such an outsized impact on the way people think about purchasing a product, where to purchase a product, et cetera.

[00:15:16] Carina Ertl: Because it's also part of creating, like, storytelling, right? And then also leveraging, like let's say we do like an in store activation, then it doesn't stop there, right? It becomes a story, it becomes content. I can start leveraging that content. So that's how I can scale it today.

[00:15:31] Matt Britton: So obviously AI is such a huge buzzword and such a huge topic of discussion, especially in the marketing community. Would love to hear first and foremost how you are using AI as a CMO on a day to day basis and maybe we can get a little bit into how your business is approaching it.

[00:15:50] Carina Ertl: So first of all, obviously, like me as a person, I love AI and I love experimenting with it. So I create my own agents, they help me in my day to day, they help me like, stay on top of my personal to do list. From a business perspective, it's obviously on the luxury retail side, I feel like we're maybe not on the early stage of adoption, but I think there is a

lot for us that we can leverage where it really helps us in processes. I see AI as a tool to optimize processes. I see, like, an opportunity to create a really strong roadmap and really identify where it can be useful and where we don't need it. So that's like a roadmap and a long term game. I mean not like five years, but like two years.

[00:16:33] Matt Britton: Yeah, I mean I can see it being effective also. And, like, if you want to see how this watch looks on you, not just how it looks on your wrist, but how it looks with you wearing a certain outfit, AI can now do that in a really accurate way. So I think what I'm getting from other guests of the podcast is there's just a general fear about AI generated content. And given everything you're saying about authenticity, I know that's not the direction you're going to go down, but that is an area that we're going to start seeing more of just more broadly in culture as, what I don't think a lot of people realize is that whatever their preconceived notion is of the fidelity of AI powered content and creative is today, it almost doesn't matter because it's going to be three times as good a year from now, and it's going to be at a place where it's indistinguishable. And I think that brands are going to have to make that decision. But brands like yours, I think, are always going to want to be authentically human, but just going to be interesting to see how it all plays out.

[00:17:27] Carina Ertl: I totally agree with you. I think for now it's a huge opportunity for luxury brands. I mean, when we met in Miami, I was talking about the advantage of the analog experience in the age of AI with Melissa Grady, who used to run marketing at Cadillac. So we really believe strongly in that experience, especially when it comes to luxury purchases. And I think that's where we can, at this very moment in time, absolutely hone in. Then, future forward, I think it's absolutely relevant for us to distinguish ourselves by making sure we are curious. And we are also constantly adjusting our taste level and staying culturally relevant, right? What I mean by that is, as any marketeer on any level, you need to be out there. You need to understand what's going on. You need to know what's happening within the cultural institutions, what's happening in subculture. You just need to be out there. You cannot just rely on AI to create, like, an event formula for you because that can be copied by everyone else. So there's a huge demand on taste and creativity and implementation and execution, and detailed execution that we can fulfill and that will drive us forward.

[00:18:35] Matt Britton: And as a global marketer, I know that there are so many nuances globally in this category, starting with how you probably want to interact with customers at the store, to how you communicate your products, et cetera. How have you been able to develop as a truly global marketer, and what are some of the skill sets that you've learned to develop over time in that regard?

[00:18:55] Carina Ertl: I think you just need to always remind yourself that while the brand is global, and you have like global brand guidelines and you want that consistency and it's absolutely necessary, that the actual client and the experience needs to be localized. Because you cater to the clients differently no matter where you are in the world. And there are

different, like, codes, there are different, and sometimes they are not even that obvious. There are different cultural moments, experiences, different styles. So I think that's something that we need to keep in mind, especially like with bigger markets like the United States, like Asia, to ensure that we are not losing the local clientele, if that makes sense.

[00:19:33] Matt Britton: Absolutely. So shifting gears as we wrap up here, Carina, and it's been a great discussion, and it's such a fascinating category. Would love to hear from you as you look back on your career journey, maybe what were some of the areas that you leaned in on throughout the course of the various positions you've had that have been fortuitous when you look back? Areas that have given you a distinct advantage or a skill set that allowed you to ultimately end up in the CMO seat?

[00:19:59] Carina Ertl: I think one rule I live by is a quote by Steve Jobs that says, like, dots connect. And sometimes while you're in it, it doesn't always make sense, but you can just trust that the dots connect. And my career is definitely an example for that. So I did consulting, I did entrepreneurship. I've been in private equity. I've been in one of the biggest global brands with Swarovski. So I feel like I've seen a lot, and I think that constant different exposure, but also pushing yourself, like, signing up for projects that are not maybe even a classic marketing project. Like, I got a lot of exposure with Swarovski to strategic projects, to strategic work, to really complex problems and breaking them down, like consulting style and taking them into smaller, like, tasks and make them workable and finding answers. I feel there's a lot of things that I learned in that experience.

And then one big moment that was really scary for me at that time, but that paid off a thousand times, was taking an intentional break and going back to business school and, like, taking a year and getting a master's degree in Stanford at their business school was definitely a huge, pivotal moment that really then set me up to further establish my career in the United States.

[00:21:12] Matt Britton: Absolutely. And when you look at building a team and tomorrow's leaders, because obviously greatness is achieved in the agency of others, I know that building a team is probably just as important to you as it is every other CMO we've had on the podcast. What are some of the new skill sets that you think maybe some of the younger listeners should really lean into to be in the CMO seat one day themselves?

[00:21:35] Carina Ertl: I think, especially for marketing in general, again, being that adaptability, because marketing is that role that changed, even in my 16 years or whatever it is now, changed so many times. There was never a year where I could just copy paste because there was something already coming. Like now it's AI, back in the days it was digital transformation. So I think having that curiosity because you cannot come out of university and say now I'm a marketeer, because it constantly changes. Like they will teach you things that in two years, three years might not be as relevant as you thought they will be. So I think just being curious

and really asking for opportunities or just, like, also doing projects that might be not necessarily marketing related but give you an overall sense of the full business case. Like I feel like you must think about the business as a whole and how you can service and how you can support the overall business instead of just being siloed in a marketing function. But curiosity, for anyone who starts, just be eager and be curious. I think that's the number one key.

[00:22:37] Matt Britton: Amazing. Well, we're going to leave it at that. This has been such a great conversation. I really appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule this fall to share your wisdom with us in such a fascinating category and remain a big fan of you and all the work that you're doing. So thanks.

[00:22:50] Carina Ertl: Matt. Thank you so much for this opportunity. It was such a great chat.

[00:22:53] Matt Britton: Absolutely. On behalf of Suzy and the Adweek team, thanks again, Carina Ertl, the Chief Marketing Officer at Bucherer USA, for joining us today. Be sure to subscribe, rate, review The Speed of Culture Podcast on your favorite podcast platform. Till next time, see you soon everyone. Bye bye.

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