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The
Tech
20

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The Tech 20

Assia Benmedjdoub ranks the 20 top tech influencers in Australian fashion.

1 The Iconic: chief operating officer Anna Lee

In 2018, Australian and New Zealand shoppers spent the equivalent of 28 years browsing on The Iconic. That breaks down to 10,400 days, 15 million minutes or close to a billion seconds. As a member of the senior executive team at The Iconic, Anna Lee is responsible for keeping the engine running. "Our customers consistently rate their interactions with our team at customer satisfaction scores of over 90%," she says. "We're always looking for the fastest ways to deliver the latest tech innovations for a seamless shopping experience to our customers." This includes product innovations such as Snap To Shop, Find Your Fit and Follow the Brand features. The Iconic has achieved over two million mobile app downloads, making it the most downloaded fashion app in Australia, and receives 13 million online visits per month. Despite these significant wins, Lee says players in the tech space can never afford

to take their eyes off the ball. "Customer expectations have never been higher, with competition in the Australian and New Zealand retail market heating up."

2 Cotton On: eCommerce manager Brendan Sweeney

When it comes to repeat business for retailers, there's nothing quite like a well-formed loyalty scheme. In 2017, Cotton On Group launched a trial of Cotton On & Co Perks in the New Zealand market. When it grew to account for 50% of sales for three of its brands, it was rolled out to the Australian market in 2018 with an average of 100,000 sign ups per week. Cotton On eCommerce head Brendan Sweeney says the data gathered allowed the company to cross-sell across other brands in its portfolio, with additional online and in-store services added such as Click Collect across the Cotton On, Typo, Cotton On Body, Supre, Cotton On Kids, Typo and Rubi store networks. Cotton On & Co

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Perks offers \$10 of rewards for every \$100 spent across the Cotton On Group portfolio, as well as birthday bonuses, invites, exclusive offers and product previews. Online sales now represent about 10% of total sales (\$2 billion) for Cotton On Group, with online penetration as steep as 15% for brands such as Cotton On Kids.

3 Country Road: channels marketing manager Paul Conti

If there's one person who can back the power of digital content marketing, it's Paul Conti. Just 12 months into the launch of Country Road's digital journal 'Live With Us' the platform recorded a revenue run rate of \$1.1 million with featured product conversions at over 4%. This marketing strategy continued when Instagram chose Country Road as one of three brands to test its Shopping feature in Australia last year. After using Instagram's 'Stories' capability to promote a Country Road capsule collection, the brand saw an average return of x18.05



on ad spend. Conti says the campaign increased conversions outside the CR collection itself. "We saw the traffic that was coming through those ads were purchasing the capsule range but were also purchasing other collections too. It was a great entry point into the brand for other people to take a look into all the other collections we have available as well."

4 The Daily Edited: founder Alyce Tran

Alyce Tran found herself in a tricky position last year.

In May, Tran and her business partner Tania Liu took a look at their books: sales were on track to hit \$30 million for the fiscal year, with earnings up 38.25%. The problem? Investor and business partner Oroton, which had injected \$4.5 million into the business after they sold a 30% stake in 2017, was in voluntary administration. Prepared to back themselves, the pair bought the stake back for a neat \$2.21 million and secured a sound financial outcome for their fledgling monogrammable leather goods business. It was a critical point for the brand, which is available online and through stores in Australia, Singapore and the US. Today, Tran says she works seven days a week, 365 days a year and has staff across the globe respond directly to her: from the CFO in Sydney or a sales associate in its US team.

5 Sportsgirl: digital manager Lauren Benci

Lauren Benci is no stranger to the tech fashion landscape, having worked at Puma, Just Group, Blue Illusion and Green With Envy. As the digital manager at Sportsgirl, she has a big year ahead with a large-scale replatforming project for sportsgirl.com.au in the works and an increased digital marketing focus. "We are no longer doing 'digital marketing' but marketing in a digital world," is the mantra Benci works by. The new Sportsgirl platform will not only offer more services such as flexible delivery options, but 'how to' video content for the booming Sportsgirl Beauty range and content around inspiring young women. Sportsgirl CEO Colleen Cal-

lander says digital activations are a core part of the business. "We utilise content across our digital channels, the Sportsgirl Beauty hub, social media and all of our stores." The retailer has seen exceptional growth and interaction across its social media channels over the last 12 months, with the marketing and digital team now constantly developing video content and driving engagement across @sportsgirl and @sportsgirlbeauty Instagram channels.



6 Cue: chief information officer Shane Lenton

It's a company that is still wholly owned by the founding family - but that doesn't mean womenswear retailer Cue, which first opened its doors in 1968, is a stickler for tradition. Having launched its eCommerce portal in May 2011, Cue ramped up the innovation stakes last year with a suite of omnichannel services released to market. This included the rollout of WeChat and Alipay systems across its network, a style finder tool and in-store technology allowing staff to confirm and pack orders for home delivery within 20 minutes. Cue chief information officer Shane Lenton says services such as Store to Door are an increasing part of the brand's digital strategy. "Innovation is at the core of everything we do at Cue, so we are always looking at ways to embrace new technologies and improve the customer shopping experience," he says.

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FROM YOUR eSTORE - ONE CLICK - TO THEIR DOOR**7 Showpo:**
general manager
Alex Durkin

Online fast fashion retailer Showpo never ends a year without a milestone: its annual revenue exceeded \$30 million in 2016 and a year later it recorded its one millionth order. In January 2019, Showpo opened a 4,700sqm warehouse in Sydney to deal with this growing demand. The new site has allowed the company to more than triple local warehousing and increased capabilities to house over one million units of stock. Durkin manages a team of six executives as the business continues to scale, with plans to extend services to the US market. Importantly, the brand also continues to place product at the centre of its growth strategy. Showpo saw revenue increase by 30% after extending its size offer by an additional three sizes. Durkin joined the business over five years ago when it was operating bricks-and-mortar locations. "The decision to go pure play was pivotal to Showpo, and allowed us to achieve the growth we needed. As the company grew, so did my responsibilities; more stock, more staff, and more revenue to be responsible for."

8 Tony Bianco:
digital marketing
manager Beth Auty

Content is king for digital marketing manager Beth Auty. But as a manager who's accountable for all eCommerce sales and KPIs across domestic and international sites, as well as local drop-ship, she also understands the need for revenue building. Auty says Instagram has become an invaluable tool for the brand, allowing for a constant stream of relevant messaging that can be adjusted at the click of a button. "For example, if it's getting a little bit colder we will switch ads to be ankle boots. Or we will start pushing our other categories such as jewellery or handbags. What we do is we change that regularly to deliver relevant content to our customers so it looks native in their feeds." Some 20% of revenue generated through paid social stems from Instagram, with 31% of impressions harking from the platform. Interestingly, 35% of followers on Instagram are now from the US, further driving export growth for the brand internationally.

**9 The PAS Group:**
head of digital
Anna Samkova

When a company attributes 75% of transactions to loyalty customers, the potential to use data for growth is limitless. This is what The PAS Group head of digital Anna Samkova discovered last year, when she unleashed a new tool that unified online and offline purchase data alongside loyalty and engagement stats. With a holistic view of customer data - drilling down as deep as colour and product preference - the Group commenced targeted campaigns via paid social and email. The result? An end-of-season paid social campaign hitting lapsed customers clocked a x4 return on ad spend. Samkova says the campaign involved advertising popular styles purchased by these customers via Facebook carousel. "We finally achieved a single customer view and I know we are the only retailer who managed to do so in four months' time," Samkova says of the strategy. "We wanted to have powerful analytics available to us in real time, all the time, and we wanted that data to give different insights across the whole organisation."

10 Seafolly:
head of digital and
eCommerce
Caroline Swarbrick

It's going to be a bumper year for freshly appointed Seafolly head of digital and eCommerce Caroline Swarbrick. After unveiling a brand new global eCommerce platform last year, Seafolly expanded its

reach across 190 countries through a partnership with marketplace Farfetch. Looking to the future, the swimwear giant intends to launch an omnichannel loyalty program called 'The Beach Club', which will allow customers to shop, earn and redeem rewards across stores and online sites. Swarbrick is well placed to take on the challenge, having spent five years at Esprit APAC in senior executive marketing and eCommerce roles. Seafolly CEO Paul Kotrba says the brand has ambitions to become the largest fashion swimwear house in the world. "Seafolly has a strong global wholesale business in over 40 countries that is delivering healthy year on year growth. Farfetch is another significant milestone in our strategy to continue."

11 Accent Group:
chief digital
officer Mark Teperson

As chief digital officer for Accent Group, Mark Teperson is critical in leading an omnichannel strategy which spans 445 stores across Australia and New Zealand. In fiscal 2018, it clocked a 130% growth in digital sales driven by four new eCommerce sites for Timberland, Dr. Martens, Platypus New Zealand and Skechers New Zealand, the launch of click-and-collect and click-and-dispatch options in Platypus and Hype, as well as the integration of after payment options in-store across retail banners. The Group, which has a dedicated digital hub to drive ideas and innovation, also introduced an endless aisle inventory solution and same day delivery for key

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capital cities. Teperson says the launch of click-and-collect and click-and-dispatch sales more than doubled digital revenue. "By just making the inventory available, we were able to generate that sales lift without investing a single cent more in the inventory. It's a huge transformation opportunity."

12 Princess Polly:
co-founder Wez Bryett

Queenslanders Wez and Eirin Bryett are hitting above their weight when it comes to their fast fashion eCommerce site, Princess Polly. Last year, private equity-backed Elevate Brandpartners took a 50% stake in the business with reports a US rollout is planned to commence this year. Eirin Bryett opened her first Princess Polly boutique in the late 2000s and with the urging of Wez, diversified into the eCommerce space. By 2010, the business had a \$10 million turnover and nine Princess Polly locations. The business is now a pureplay operator with merchandise targeted at the wardrobes of 16 to 26-year-olds. Ardell Lashes, Dr Martens, L.A. Girl, Quay Australia and Windsor Smith are some of the brands offered on the site.

**13 Catch Group:**
CEO Nati Harpaz

During peak periods, pure-play company Catch Group can ship more than 10,000 parcels a day from its automated distribution centre in Melbourne's industrial outer west. In fact, CEO Nati Harpaz expects demand to be so significant over the next five years, the Group has just unveiled a new 22,000sqm warehouse close to its existing facility. "Catch Group has been experiencing significant growth over the last two years, as we continue to expand our product

offering and grow our Marketplace," he says. The website already offers in excess of 1.9 million SKUs via the Marketplace platform and has over 1.2 million active customers. In 2017, the online shopping group purchased iconic childrenswear brand Pumpkin Patch from voluntary administration. It now offers the brand on its platform, alongside daily deals for men's, women's and kid's fashion brands.

14 Bec + Bridge:
brand and sales director
Jordana Sexton

Don't let her job title fool you: her beat is sales, but her nous for eCommerce and digital strategy is unquestionable. Australian designer womenswear label Bec + Bridge has seen online sales increase 130% year on-year through a mix of delivery, online marketing and redesign initiatives. Brand and sales director Jordana Sexton says a relentless focus on key trading periods is vital to ensuring maximum return. "Spring racing is huge for us and there is a heavy focus on our dress category during this period - for instance, dresses made up 73% of all sales in September 2018 alone." New season launch EDMs and Instagram are the key drivers for converting customer sales. "We also see a high ROI on sponsored Instagram posts, which we have only recently started to run for the brand," she says. An Instagram bridal edit late last year saw the collection sell out within days of being online. "We were forced to produce re-cuts almost immediately."

15 Honey Birdette:
online
manager Charlotta Forslof

Intimate apparel retailer Honey Birdette is aiming to operate up to 20 stores in the US over the next two to three years. Key to its success? An aggressive influencer strategy in the market which has seen US online sales now account for 35% of the business. This organic digital growth has largely been driven on social media platforms such as Instagram. Honey Birdette founder Eloise Monaghan credits her digital and marketing teams for snowballing US growth in a short amount of time. "Certainly online, we're seeing the brand resonate in New York, LA, Florida and Texas and 50% of social followers are now from the States." The brand currently has stores in Los Angeles and other key trading districts.

16 Amazon:
head of Amazon
fashion Australia Angela
Langmann

While regulatory documents indicate Amazon made a modest \$16 million in sales for the first month of trade in Australia, the online giant is starting to pick up traction. The platform launched an online storefront 'The Local Fashion Store' leading up to Christmas 2018, housing more than 150 brands such as Tony Bianco, Orotton and Lorna Jane. It wasn't just the bigger brands which earned a slice of the pie however, with labels such as



Local Supply and Third Form also getting in on the initiative. Langmann says the strategy, which also included an awards program for local designers, cements its dedication to fashion category growth. "We are really excited to be empowering some brilliant home-grown talent by putting them front and centre on our Fashion store. We know Aussies love to shop local and we want to help them do just that."

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17 Big W: general manager of digital Kate Langford

BIG W is now in its third year of a turnaround strategy, as it attempts to claw back successive profit losses. In October, the discount department store revealed online sales had grown 177% over the last quarter due to the adoption of pick-up options, range expansion and improvements in the search functionality of its site. Big W digital head Kate Langford is among those leading the digital turnaround, as parent company Woolworths looks to invest in company-wide tech capabilities. "There's a lot of work that we're doing at the moment to help data inform decisions on inventory forecasting, that's intent-based, to help us get better at efficient processes." Endless aisle is next on the agenda, in addition to a more data-centric approach to marketing and communications. Over the last 18 months, it has diversified its media mix from a catalogues-heavy approach with social, digital, out-of-home, radio and screens added to the mix.



finance system, a new PLM system and a new eCommerce platform allowing it to replicate sites in the UK, Europe and Singapore. If there's an ambassador for tech investment in the industry, it's McNally. "At the time, increased demand had begun to outstrip supply, our systems were bowing under the strain and temporary labour was just being thrown randomly into the mix without any clear direction," she says. "We simply had to do it." The successful designer brand is now readying itself for vertical retail expansion offshore.

18 Witchery: head of marketing and digital Jennifer Petropoulos

2018 was a year of digital gains for fashion retailer Witchery: it clocked over 20% year-on-year growth in online sales, as well as its biggest ever sale day during Vogue Online Shopping Night. It hauled an impressive \$1 million in just 24 hours, cementing a strategy which will see the brand place increased focus on continued online growth in 2019. As head of marketing and digital for the retailer, Jennifer Petropoulos brings years of industry experience to the role having worked at Target and TK Maxx. Witchery MD Simon Schofield is quick to praise ongoing gains in the online space and the power of a results-driven pool of talent. "Performance is strong and we've got a very stable team. A very talented team."

20 Target Australia: head of digital experience Sally Lennox

At a 2018 strategy day for Wesfarmers, legendary department stores CEO Guy Russo praised the steady progress in Target's online business. In addition to a central distribution centre to pick, pack and ship orders to customers, it was reducing delivery times to customers through in-store fulfilment of digital purchases. For head of digital experience Sally Lennox, it was about progressively rolling out the service to stores rather than a blanket solution nationally. "We started very slowly - you don't need to turn on every single store to begin with." It is just one pillar in a full turnaround strategy for the discount department store, which is using loyalty data to drive a customer-led omnichannel strategy. How far can the data drill down? It knows the average Target customer is a mother who spends 15 minutes in the store and is most likely to shop for (in order) her home, kids and, finally, for herself. ■

19 Camilla: CEO Jane McNally

Ok, so Camilla is technically not an online fashion brand and a CEO is technically not a digital or eCommerce head. But that's where Jane McNally diverges from the rest: technically. Last year, she instituted a mass infrastructure overhaul at the designer fashion brand which saw the team spend 300 hours a week on structural changes. In a bid to prepare itself for international expansion, it loaded up its tech armoury with a host of upgrades: a cloud-based ERP and



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