

parel design students, the company worked with Browzwear to outfit all the terminals in the department's computer lab with the 3D design

software. "I have trained five faculty members who now know the software and are able to use it in the curriculum," explains Pasakarnis, who

has also taught the software directly to UNCG students "who learn the software so quickly."

— Jessica Binns

Xcel Brands

New York, N.Y. | www.xcelbrands.com

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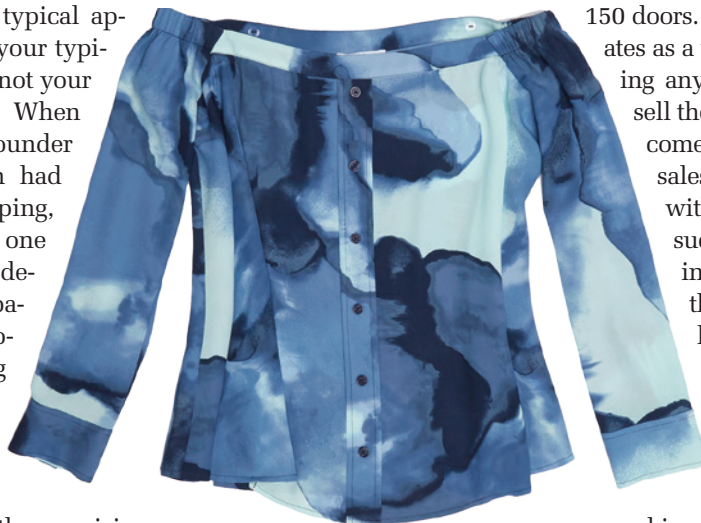
Xcel Brands is not your typical apparel company; it's not your typical media company; and it's not your typical licensing company. When it was launched in 2011, founder and president Bob D'Loren had a vision to reimagine shopping, entertainment and social as one entity. The result is a brand development and media company engaged in the design, production, licensing, marketing and direct-to-consumer sales of branded apparel, footwear, accessories, jewelry, home goods and other consumer products, and in the acquisition of dynamic consumer lifestyle brands.

In its brand portfolio? Isaac Mizrahi, H Halston, C. Wonder, Judith Ripka and Highline Collective, which it promotes through an omnichannel sales strategy that includes direct-response television, internet, brick-and-mortar retail, and e-commerce channels.

Xcel operates under three umbrellas: interactive TV (creating media broadcasts in nine countries, generating \$350 million in annual sales); specialty retail (which handles brand extensions into products as diverse as BAND-AIDS and tissue boxes, sold at retailers such as Best Buy and Staples); and wholesale.

"Our brands are dynamic, in that we have authentic personalities who drive [connection and interest] via social media. We're one of the few companies at QVC that can cross-promote on air," says D'Loren. "Consider Isaac Mizrahi, who knits and paints. We launched a line of yarn at Michael's for which he created a DIY video, and then he spoke on his show on QVC on that Monday night. That's powerful."

As for the wholesale apparel side of its business, D'Loren describes it as "licensing 4.0." A far cry from your typical licensing model, Xcel operates a design-to-retail supply chain for customers including Hudson's Bay, Lord & Taylor and most recently, Dillard's, where it just launched H Halston in



150 doors. Xcel Brands essentially operates as a vertical retailer without owning any of the inventory. It doesn't sell the product; rather, its revenues come from a percentage of top-line sales. Although it collaborates with its retail customers in areas such as planning and identifying trends, Xcel Brands does all the design, sourcing and marketing work, says D'Loren. "The retailers take the inventory risk."

Recently, taking a page from the world of fast fashion, Xcel has been working to achieve faster turnaround times and also to keep a close watch on sales data so it can respond quickly to meet demand. In spring 2016, for example, the company worked with Lord & Taylor to quickly replenish a best-selling blouse that had sold out in days. When the popular off-the-shoulder Isaac Mizrahi blouse sold out quickly, feedback was immediately sent down the supply chain, and blouses were back in stock in six weeks.

Enabling this quick insight into sales data and quick response is the recent implementation of a fully integrated suite of solutions, including PLM, ERP, and SCM from NGC Software.

That quick replenishment at Lord & Taylor? "Previously, that would have taken nine to twelve months," says D'Loren, adding that implementing this type of technology for a department store environment is more challenging than for a vertical retailer such as Zara, which turns inventory five to six times per year. NGC worked closely with Xcel to make tweaks to the process to get things just right, he says. "When you're turning three to four times a year, weekly inventory flow becomes critical."

With design and sourcing able to respond more quickly to understand and meet customer demand, Xcel Brands is helping its retail partners sell more product at full price.

— Jordan K. Speer