

Fashion merchandizer gives formula for success

By CAROL MAHONEY

A summer job as a \$1-an-hour salesgirl was the beginning of Brenda Rosenberg's success story. Now, as vice president and director of corporate fashion merchandising at the J.L. Hudson Co., the Orchard Lake resident has been instrumental in helping other aspiring young people reach their goals.

Mrs. Rosenberg was among four Michigan women to receive one of Northwood Institute's 10 Distinguished Women Awards for 1979. Northwood cited her for outstanding accomplishments in the fashion industry and for her dedication to helping young people maximize their talents.

Assisting in the formulation of the fashion merchandising program at Northwood Institute was her chief contribution to the Midland school. Making the program as practical as possible was her intent. "The program takes a very realistic view. Everything is applicable. It really prepares someone to go out into the working world," she said.

Mrs. Rosenberg decries the kind of pie-in-the-sky impractical approach taken by some fashion schools. She claims that many of them neglect to stress the basic information a student needs when applying for a job.

"There is a certain language used. If you can talk the financial numbers to store people, it already puts you on a different level," she said. Terms such as cost out, mark up, and mark down are part of the fashion jargon she explained. In addition, Mrs. Rosenberg believes that it is essential for students to talk to people in the industry.

She tries to speak at as many Northwood Institute seminars as her busy schedule allows. She is also on Northwood's National Women's Board and the Board of Fellows.

She admits that her present schedule at Hudson's is crammed, but she loves it. "I live, eat and breathe fashion," she said.

AS FOR HER meteoric rise from salesgirl to vice president, she said, "I

"If I ever found that I wasn't really excited about where I was going, I would quit the next day."

don't see how anybody can be successful in the fashion industry without being a salesperson first." Even in her present job she says she will still spend a day on the sales floor to get an idea of what is being asked for.

A fine arts major at Wayne State University, Mrs. Rosenberg said she had originally dreamed of working at the Detroit Art Institute. Her part-time jobs during college introduced her to the retail world, however, and she has been there ever since.

She credits these early jobs with giving her an invaluable background in sales, bookkeeping, and window display.

"My store manager had a boyfriend and she wanted to leave early so she taught me how to do the book work," said Mrs. Rosenberg of her first job. A less than ambitious display person anx-

ious to unload her job on a willing pupil allowed her to put clothes together for window displays.

MRS. ROSENBERG describes her present position as one which dictates the direction Hudson's will take in regard to men's, women's and children's fashions.

"My job is to set the mood of Hudson's for each fashion season. I shop almost every fashion market in the world," she said.

Determining the fashion trends takes a lot of traveling. Mrs. Rosenberg said she is in New York at least twice a month and goes to Europe four times a year.

"I attend fashion shows and shop the stores to get the pulse of what is going on."

Last fall while in Florence, she found it interesting that the trend in the

stores there seemed to be toward "Americana. I saw Topsiders, loafers, and argyle sweaters in the windows."

She thinks the ivy league and junior league look is having an influence on Europeans.

Having spent 13 years in the fashion industry, Mrs. Rosenberg sees many opportunities for young women.

"Fashion as an industry was one of the first ones to be open to women and opportunities continue to grow not only in the creative end, but in the financial and management ends as well."

Mrs. Rosenberg believes the best preparation for entry into the fashion industry should be well balanced. Even if a woman is interested primarily in the financial part of the business, she suggests that classes in art and design will be helpful.

"She will be better able to understand every aspect of the business."

The formula for success in fashion according to Mrs. Rosenberg is "being willing to not only do your job, but take on other people's responsibility. Be aggressive without being abrasive," she said.

Although she concedes that her travel schedule along with some possible 16 hours days could be grueling to some, she's not about to give it up.

"People either love it or hate it. If I ever found that I wasn't really excited about where I was going, I would quit the next day."

Mrs. Rosenberg said her husband, a Southfield attorney, is "extremely supportive and does everything to help." She said he accompanied her on her last two trips to Europe and plans to go with her on the next.

"We combine it with some vacation time," she said.



Friends ask Brenda Rosenberg how she can live her life at such a high level. She knows some people might consider her work schedule grueling, but she says she thrives on it. (Staff photo by John Stano)

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