



Brunello Cucinelli returns to Dreamforce.

BUSINESS

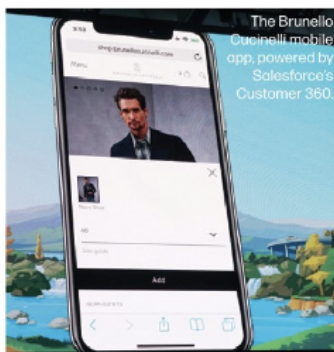
Cucinelli Gives Tech-Filled Keynote at Dreamforce

- The software giant welcomed back the fashion executive, along with other guests like Metallica's Lars Ulrich, to talk retail technology.

BY ADRIANA LEE

Salesforce's latest Dreamforce, the massive annual conference focused on the company's customer relationship management platform, welcomed back old friends and revealed some new ones in its keynote on Tuesday.

Brunello Cucinelli, a session speaker at Dreamforce 2017, returned as a keynote guest and the subject of a video presentation that drew on a key theme he discussed last year: the necessity of humanizing technology. "In some small way, I wanted to be a trailblazer of the human soul," he said in Italian during the video. "When our company was listed on the stock exchange six years ago, people said we wouldn't be able to run a business that made fair profits and achieved gracious growth, while somehow supporting human dignity in a sort of humanistic capitalism."



And yet, under his people-centered stewardship, Brunello Cucinelli SpA rang in 269.5 million euros in sales in the first half of the year, for a growth of 9 percent year-over-year, and a net profit of 23.8 million euros, a 19.7 percent gain over last year.

Onstage, the Italian designer and philosopher joined Marc Benioff, the Salesforce co-chief executive officer known recently as the man who bought Time magazine. But all the attention was on innovation, as Cucinelli called Dreamforce

a "cradle of genius." He spoke of the company's work in transformative tones: "You have changed mankind," he told Benioff through a translator. "Like Greece 2,500 years ago with its ideas – it was willing to change the world. That's what we did during the Renaissance."

Cucinelli advised the tech leader to build something lasting, something whose vision goes beyond the next quarter or couple of years. "We need to think about three-month and three-year plans – this is a business, that counts, too. But parallel to that, we also need plans for the next 2,000 years," he added.

The presentation offered glimpses of how the fashion magnate powers the company's "white glove customer experience" with Salesforce technology for predictive selling, customer service based on deeper insights and handy dashboards, and others.

Amid an array of visitors – from Metallica's Lars Ulrich, whose band uses Salesforce tech for its merchandise channels, as well as representatives from Marriott, Unilever and PepsiCo – the tech remained the main attraction of the show.

Salesforce highlighted new integrations, features and partnerships, including those

with Amazon Web Services and Apple's iOS, among others. The company doubled down on artificial intelligence. "We're thrilled to welcome our trailblazers to Dreamforce and empower them with the technology innovation and skills they need to thrive in the fourth industrial revolution," said Benioff. "This is our biggest and most exciting Dreamforce ever with 171,000 registered to attend, 2,700 sessions, and 10 million joining us online. We could not be more excited."

According to co-ceo Keith Block, "nearly every company and every industry is going through an amazing digital transformation." For retail, that amounts to AI-driven personalization, a unified – or omnichannel – retail experience across physical and online environments, better communication tools and more meaningful insights.

To address the need, Salesforce's new Customer 360 platform enables administrators to easily connect Salesforce apps and manage customer data across cloud services through a click-based user interface. The system allows for real-time, contextually relevant profiles for each individual customer.

The need to unite data across various sources makes Salesforce's integration with MuleSoft's Anypoint Platform interesting, as its application network graph heightens contextual information. The platform can report information from all systems and apps, their metadata and how they relate to each other.

One of the keynote's highlights was Einstein Voice, a tool that allows users to talk to the Salesforce platform. The platform-agnostic voice assistant offers daily briefings and easier administrative controls, and makes it simpler to make customer-facing bots that connect to Salesforce. The notion is to give retailers a way to build custom bots through "clicks, not code," for new ways to interact with customers.

The move speaks to AI-powered voice technology's growing traction in retail. Now backed by Salesforce, the tech trend's retail adoption could jump even further: Its Commerce Cloud alone runs thousands of e-commerce sites for some of the world's largest brands and retailers.

"Commerce Cloud runs a little over 3,300 stores globally, with 25 billion in GMV (gross merchandise volume) processing, growing a little over 36 percent a year," Mike Micucci, CEO of Commerce Cloud, told WWD. "So it's powering a lot of stores."

"There's a huge shift going on cross-industry, and [retailers] are expecting really unique experiences...that shape the way the customers interact with their products and their brand, whether it's an in-store experience or on their phone in a brand new app," he added. "So the platform needs to be flexible and allow you to build that experience." ■

BEAUTY

Lauder Promotes Chris Good

- He was named a group president, as Claudia Benshimol was tapped for a senior vice president role.

BY JENNY B. FINE

Chris Good has been elevated to group president, North America, at The Estée Lauder Cos. Inc. The move comes just over

a year after he was named president of the region. Good, a 15-year Lauder veteran, was president of the U.K. and Ireland before assuming his current role, where net sales grew double digits on average in constant currency and online sales tripled during his five years.

The relatively fast promotion is a recognition of Good's work in "reviving growth of the market with a number of brands gaining share in every major category," a spokeswoman said. The company noted that his expertise in channel strategy, leveraging data analytics and building local relevancy have been catalysts in strengthening retail partnerships in North America.

The move also signals a commitment to Lauder's home market, chief executive officer Fabrizio Freda said in a statement.

"As our home market, with a competitive and fast-evolving prestige beauty landscape, North America remains a central part of our corporate strategy and an important engine for the company's long-term sustainable growth." Good, whose new title takes effect immediately, joins John Demsey, Jane Hertzmark Hudis and Cedric Prouvé as group presidents at the company.

In a related move, Claudia Benshimol has been promoted to senior vice president, general manager of Estée Lauder and Aerin Beauty, North America, effective Oct. 1. She will report to Good and Stéphane de la Faverie, global brand president of Estée Lauder. Benshimol, who most recently held the position of vice president, account management for the brands, is a six-year veteran of Lauder who was previously at Belk and Dillard's. ■



Chris Good