

# Cultivating a Culture of Empowerment

With a female trifecta at the top, Paula's Choice proves that bringing its brand DNA of empowerment to the forefront is key to finding success.

**E**mpowerment, including empowerment of women, is a message that Paula Begoun has carefully woven throughout the DNA of Paula's Choice since its inception – a quality she counts as the key to the brand's overall success.

In its 25 years, Paula's Choice has earned a loyal following through a dedication to its consumers, empowering them to make the best skincare decisions possible by providing transparency, education and research-backed products that work. But what consumers don't know is that the work of empowerment starts long before production, and in fact is part of the brand's core philosophy at every stage.

"Throughout my 40-year career in beauty I have always focused on empowering people through research, facts, and education so they can make the best skincare decisions possible," said Begoun. "And I know that whatever we are trying to accomplish in life, that the way to self-esteem, self-confidence, and healing is following the path of knowledge to improve our own lives and the lives of others as well."

Today, alongside her, Begoun has been joined by a force of female leadership with Tara Poseley, chief executive officer at Paula's Choice and Erika Kussmann, chief marketing officer at Paula's Choice, along with an all-female team of general managers across Europe and Asia, to further bring her focus to life.

## Female trifecta

Together, in the past two years, the trio has led the brand to achieve two times the sales growth, four times the Instagram following and over four times the customer acquisition. In 2020, Paula's Choice was named one of the five most talked-about beauty brands on Reddit and, thanks to its Tik Tok popular products, was among the top four brands gaining the most traction via search according to Google and Spate.

According to Begoun, Poseley and Kussmann, these accomplishments, and on a larger scale the brand's strength in consumer connection, should be attributed to the corporate culture from within Paula's Choice. Put simply, by cultivating ethos that empowers from within, the brand can share those values with the consumer in an authentic way.

The goal is to help everyone on the team bring out big, out-of-the-box ideas by advocating for all employees to be proud of their concept that they believe will ultimately help the company. As a leader Poseley says she goes into every meeting with the mindset of allowing her opinion to be altered. Putting this into



Erika Kussmann,  
chief marketing  
officer at  
Paula's Choice



Paula Begoun,  
founder of  
Paula's Choice



Tara Poseley, chief  
executive officer  
at Paula's Choice

practice the team is then able to take the best part of an idea and collaborate to create the best outcome.

"To run a truly creative or agile organization, where the people doing the work are the people making the decisions, has to mean creating space for making a wrong decision, balanced with being accountable and taking responsibility for improving our own processes," said Poseley. "It's essential for people to be stretching, learning and pushing to drive creativity and innovation."

When it comes to life lessons, Begoun said, "I wish I had known that if I'm the smartest person in the room I'm in the wrong room. Surrounding yourself with smart people with different backgrounds helps you form better ideas and make the best well-informed balanced decisions."

"In corporate culture, we don't give enough credit to how operating with kindness and respect can drive business results," said Poseley. "Leading with kindness and respect doesn't mean we don't hold ourselves to an incredibly high standard of professionalism but we do it without antagonism or rivalry. We learn from each other and focus on how we can motivate ourselves and our teams to the next level of excellence and success whilst maintaining a collective spirit".

## Collective value

"We rolled out the agile way of working across our organization so that we can work together, collaboratively, as high-performing teams to effectively deliver the most value to the customer as a brand," said Kussmann.

Notably, Begoun, Poseley and Kussmann have a diverse set of professional backgrounds prior to joining forces at Paula's Choice – something that the team has embraced and has led to a

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chief executive officer  
at Paula's Choice

well-rounded, open leadership style. For Poseley, joining Paula's Choice four years ago felt like a new chapter, one where she was able to contribute to building a culture that she believed in.

"It was the first time I could really unleash all those parts of me and show up to an organization, full-throttle as me. It was liberating and exciting," said Poseley. "I said on the first day, leave your ego at the door. I get excited about hiring super smart people around me, thought partners with incredible judgment who I can constantly learn from. I want to keep learning."

From Begoun, Poseley said she felt a new confidence that she in turn shares with

those around her. "Paula was a real beacon of that, enabling me to step into my role with confidence. I do better with strong women and men, and Paula's embodiment of these values were important to me and how I could use her as a mentor."

## Leading with kindness

Further Poseley applauded her colleagues for leading with kindness which she has seen as being as indispensable for creating a culture across the entire company for an open dialogue where employees bring ideas to the table. "Leading with kindness changes everything in business for the better because when people feel compassion and empathy they do incredible things and come to work with pride and excitement ready," said Poseley.

Echoing the sentiment, Kussmann told WWD, "Human beings should treat one another with respect. That's how I operate as a leader and those are the expectations I set for my organization. I learn from my team every day and they are why our brand has the momentum we're experiencing today."

Moreover, Begoun said it is important to recognize that a company can only truly be successful when the people they bring together are in the right environment to grow together, establish ways to encourage and focus on equal opportunities – all are recognized.

"I'm proud to say Paula's Choice Skincare is fueled by intelligent, talented and caring women and men too," said Begoun. "I have been privileged to work with so many amazing people at Paula's Choice Skincare. Whether it's my brilliant research team, eloquent writers, creative geniuses, financial gurus or compassionate managers they have all been dedicated to their work and they create magic on a daily basis."