



Meghan is Keilhauer's new CMO, and the first in the company's history. Photos courtesy of Keilhauer

An Interview with Meghan Sherwin

by Anna Zappia

Meghan Sherwin has been named Keilhauer's first-ever chief marketing officer. Most recently the vice president of marketing, she led the latest masterbrand transition, launched the company's first carbon-neutral chair, and delivered a new customer-centric strategy. She will continue to provide lead-

ership within the marketing and sustainability departments, but her purview now extends to include customer service, warranty, and outbound logistics. I spoke with Sherwin about the new role, her favorite product launches, and Keilhauer's growth, even in the midst of the pandemic.

Anna Zappia (AZ): Meghan, you began your career on the advertising side. How does that experience inform the work you are doing at Keilhauer today?

Meghan Sherwin (MS): I am an ad girl, and one of my favorite things is developing a new brand. We launched Division Twelve just over a year ago, and I have to say, it's a highlight for me personally. It's a new metal furniture line, and it's been such a positive experience both internally and externally. It's allowed us to pilot new initiatives, and be a bit more agile.

I bring all of these experiences and conversations I've had with other brands to the table at Keilhauer. I've learned from some incredible marketers and business leaders throughout my career, from Mastercard to Kraft. Through my work with all of these dif-

ferent brands, I've essentially accumulated a little tool box or bag of tricks that I can apply to challenges. I can look at a problem from multiple angles because of the breadth of my experience.

At Keilhauer, because we connect with different industries through our products, there's a semblance of empathy, an intuitive understanding of what those people working in health-care, banking, or hospitality need.

AZ: Meghan, you have been with Keilhauer since 2017. Can you tell me about some of your key initiatives and launches so far?

MS: We launched the first Keilhauer brand purpose and drafted the first enterprise-level metrics for the organization. That allowed us to ensure that all of the employees are working toward the same vision and goal. As

a leadership team, we really wanted to lean into the company culture and what made us unique. We wanted to drive that forward, and to some degree, mature that strategy. I am proud that I joined an organization that has an incredibly positive culture, and that I was able to add some value there.

Of course there was the launch of Swurve, our first carbon-neutral office chair. How could I not be proud of that? While Keilhauer was built on this earth-friendly philosophy, the chair was a goal of ours. I think it's a meaningful response to a growing need. I am also excited about the new website that launched this year. We designed an intuitive UX, new CRM and CMS systems. It's more refined in terms of the brand articulation. We've created this great skeleton that we're able to continue building on, so it's just the beginning.



Sherwin led the development of the award-winning Division Twelve branding. Division Twelve is Keilhauer's new line of metal furniture.

AZ: Meghan, you are Keilhauer's first CMO. What does that mean for you, and the company?

MS: It's an exciting time for us. And I think adding the role of CMO was a response to our continued desire to focus on the customer experience. We want to make sure our designers, dealers, media partners, and end-users have positive interactions with us. When I started, I led the portfolios of marketing, showrooms, and textiles. That leadership now includes customer service, outbound logistics, and warranty. That puts the entire external-facing

experience under my purview, which allows us to really have a lead on that customer journey. I can protect and nourish the brand at every touchpoint.

I've worked with some incredible brands over the course of my career, but this role as CMO is really exciting for me because it is about the customer experience. I do think marketing has the potential to be so much more than what people think of when they think of classic marketing: TV, radio, print, and digital advertising. Customer service, for example, has an incredible opportunity to connect with our end-users and understand what they want and need.

We also want to promote closed-loop manufacturing, and warranty is integral to that. I think right now, a lot of people are focused on the employee experience. That's incredibly important, but at the same time, customers' expectations in terms of how they communicate with brands and companies has changed drastically. I think this is an evolution, an organizational response to strengthening our customer-first strategy.

AZ: As CMO, what do you want to bring to Keilhauer's sustainability efforts?

MS: Keilhauer was founded with sustainability in mind. It's one of the

company's key pillars. So, my goal over the past three years for the sustainability team has been about meeting the market, trying to understand where the trends are going, and to inspire the team to evolve our practices. Of course, we have to continue to reduce our impact on the environment with facilities and operations, but we also have to deliver products that resonate and are forward-thinking.

I think the 2030 Challenge was a great call to arms for the industry, and for us as a company. That's why Swurve is such a meaningful solution. It was the culmination of many things, and I find that the carbon-neutral process allows us to really get into the weeds on a lot of product launches. We learn a lot from it. Our supply chain has to be vetted through third-party auditors to make sure we're measuring our carbon appropriately. We have to have the right material, and we have to understand our operations. It's not just about putting our logo on something—it's about positive change.

AZ: The pandemic has been difficult, particularly for the contract furniture industry, yet Keilhauer has experienced continued growth and success. Why do you think that is?

MS: The pandemic has been tough economically for all of us, and I'd be remiss to say we weren't impacted, because we were. We made a conscious decision to have confidence in who we are and what we stand for. We continued to invest in product development. We went ahead with our product launches, and we continued our marketing efforts. Things had to change, because you always have to react to market forces and the context. So, instead of a printed brochure, we went to a digital version. We all had to make those types of pivots. We did continue our project initiatives, and I do believe that investment is propelling us forward now. ■



Sherwin launched Keilhauer's first carbon-neutral office chair, Swurve.



Swurve was designed with sustainability in mind.