

# Life lessons: what we've learnt about... the business of sustainability

The co-founders of Positive Luxury – CEO Diana Verde Nieto and chairwoman Karen Hanton – discuss their model for success

**B** AS TOLD TO FRANCES HEDGES / MAY 1, 2019



COURTESY OF POSITIVE LUXURY



*Diana Verde Nieto (left) and Karen Hanton*

At **Positive Luxury**, we work at the intersection of luxury, sustainability and technology, connecting high-end brands with people who care. Our Butterfly Mark identifies the brands that meet the highest standards of innovation, social and environmental performance, equipping people to make informed purchasing decisions in a transparent way.

The day is filled up with challenges: big ones, little ones, some that don't matter at all, some that matter a lot. The knack is to know which is which! The challenge is also to put together a diverse team – you need a bit of (healthy) tension to drive things forward and make things happen. Here are our five golden rules for success.

**Be resilient and believe it'll work out.** We launched Positive Luxury in 2012 through our passion belief that everyone, whether an individual or a corporate, has a major part to play in preserving the future. The concept of sustainability was at a relatively early stage back then and it wasn't easy to persuade people to join in. There were some tough times but we don't give up easily – and we're so glad we didn't.

**Don't give up, just reinvent.** We have both previously founded businesses so we expected that we'd have to be flexible. In a start-up, it's essential to be prepared and, once the venture is off the ground, to be proactive about evolving the model as new information emerges. While the basic idea of Positive Luxury remains as we first conceived it, we have had to do our fair share of reinvention during the implementation process.

**Kindness matters.** There's a prevailing idea in popular culture that entrepreneurs have to be 'tough' to get things done and gain respect; we have found the opposite is true. The same rules apply to business as life in general – treat others as you would like to be treated.

**Stay true to your values.** Even though we were brought up worlds apart in geographical terms – Diana in Argentina and Karen in Aberdeen – it's remarkable how similar our basic ethics are. These include very simple things: do what you promise, work hard, go the extra mile and help one another. Maybe that's why our partnership works so well, in that we share the same values and beliefs that underpin who we are and what we do.

**Have confidence, in yourself and others.** Like everyone, women sometimes lack confidence, even though we do a pretty good job of covering it up. Remember that as a leader, you aren't there to solve every single problem. Even though it can be difficult for founders to entrust their 'baby' to somebody else, you just can't do everything yourself, and when people feel trusted they usually do a great job.

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