

The Impact of BELIEVE

An Interview with Guillaume Gauthereau, President and Chief Executive Officer, Lalique North America

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to being appointed to his current post in January 2006, Guillaume Gauthereau served as the Managing Director of Lalique Limited (United Kingdom) from 2003 to 2005. Before joining Lalique, he helped manage Louis Vuitton's global retail flagship in Paris. Gauthereau is the recipient of a PhD in veterinary medicine and a business and marketing diploma from Paris University.



Guillaume Gauthereau

COMPANY BRIEF Lalique is globally headquartered in Paris, and offers a range of exclusive luxury products – including crystal objets d'art, furniture, mirrors, jewelry, and fragrance – through a network of 70 boutiques and retail locations worldwide. René Lalique opened his workshop during the late 1800s and began creating jewelry, perfume bottles, vases, and inkwells with much success. In 1921, Lalique moved his production facilities to Wingen-sur-Moder, France, where the company continues manufacturing today.

Lalique has been very involved in the BELIEVE campaign. What is BELIEVE, and how has it performed thus far?

BELIEVE is a cooperative fundraising effort that aims to alleviate poverty in developing countries around the world, with the help of select luxury brands. Each brand works with BELIEVE to develop products that will raise awareness and funds to help alleviate poverty around the world. Ten percent of net sales on these products goes directly to BELIEVE to distribute among poverty-alleviation charities that have been recommended by the Clinton Global Initiative.

Essentially, BELIEVE is a nonprofit organization that works exclusively with luxury brands to alleviate poverty. Those of us at the top of the scale really can help those in need who are still just surviving. BELIEVE was developed to assist those without the most basic needs like clean water, food, shelter, and health care. Here in the U.S., one dollar can't get you a sandwich or a taxi ride, but in some countries, you can feed one person for an entire week with one dollar. With that in mind, you can't help but think there is something we can do – that even a very small percentage of a luxury brand's sales on a few products can make a difference to those in dire

need. We at BELIEVE are also making sure our donations go directly to those in need by setting up extremely integrated relationships with our charity partners in order to be as transparent as possible. In time, you will also be able to track on the BELIEVE Web site how the funds we collect are benefiting people around the world.

As a luxury brand executive, you may not have much experience in the nonprofit sector. With that in mind, how can you be sure BELIEVE is actually impacting lives in the way it's intended to?

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Nothing like BELIEVE has ever existed, but the organization's advisory board members have experience running nonprofit organizations and can anticipate the challenges associated with raising and allocating funds. To make sure these funds reach the right people, we are working with some incredible minds in the nonprofit sector who are dedicated to transparency. As luxury brands, our job is to sell beautifully

crafted products, so we don't know how to work on the ground in countries in need. There are so many political problems that it's hard to know if money is reaching anyone. BELIEVE partners with its charities in a very hands-on manner to make sure all funds really do arrive to those who need them most.

How are the brands that participate in the BELIEVE program selected?

It's a group decision on the part of the board, but all of the participants are at the highest end of the industry. We want every luxury brand that is part of the campaign to feel comfortable with its company; it's relatively easy to decide if a brand is high-end or not.

Do you anticipate that even competitive brands would join forces through BELIEVE?

Yes. If you really want to have an effect in alleviating poverty, it's not about competitive behavior. People must work together to create change. Brands that are, on paper, competitors – selling vases, ready-to-wear fashion, or hotel services – can come together with this campaign to make an impact on the world. It will show real commitment in a human way, to join forces to work on these critical issues together. When we speak to the press, we find it is a fascinating story, because the campaign aims to bring these competitive brands together – there's a greater sense of urgency that creates a much more powerful message that we hope will really stir the public. People today are really concerned that corporate involvement with charities is just about good PR. That's why we built BELIEVE in a new way, because we are committed to bringing high-end luxury brands together to alleviate the struggle of those in dire poverty around the world. The fact that all of us are working together makes this concept unique.

How will you measure the impact that BELIEVE has on people's lives?

We will only work with charitable organizations that make the most out of each dollar. As I said earlier, we are partnering with charities, working with them when needed on a daily and weekly basis to ensure that funds are getting to those in need. We are also planning to track the number of lives being affected on our Web site. BELIEVE's goal is to affect one million lives by 2012, and we hope to bring that excitement to life on our Web site with this tracker and with biographies of those whose lives have changed for the better. ●