

CEO Corner: How a Gucci Lawyer Became Fashion's 'Fixer'

By Lauren Parker | February 14th, 2023



The name [Fixer Advisory Group](#), a full-service brand and retail consultancy for the fashion industry, has an air of damage control to it. But founder and CEO Nicole Marra is no Olivia Pope. Unlike the protagonist of ABC's hit show "Scandal," Marra spends more time preventing brand and retail fires than putting them out.

Sourcing Journal caught up with the lawyer and fashion entrepreneur, who spent 10 years as the general counsel for [Gucci](#) and other Kering brands before launching a Soho fashion boutique and now her consultancy, to learn how she works preemptively with companies on various business and social issues.

Sourcing Journal: So, we should we call you Olivia?

Nicole Marra: *(laughs)*. Well, being a fixer does focus on cleaning up messes, but it's also about being proactive to make sure messes don't happen. Our core values are focused on being agile problem solvers, and there's almost nothing we can't fix in some way. I partner with many experts across different fields, so we're always able to find a solution whether we have the resources in-house or not.

What was the impetus to launch Fixer Advisory Group?

N.M.: One of the things I loved the most about being a general counsel and working with incredible heritage brands over the years was the ability to impact and improve so many areas of the business. But then I thought, what about independent brands with fewer resources? How can we provide a solution for them to have the same level of expertise and experience without having to hire big conglomerates? That's when I pivoted to create Fixer Advisory.

Do you find that companies are more proactive instead of reactive these days?

N.M.: Absolutely. Given the way social media works, we've all seen both luxury and non-luxury brands have issues that blow up and spread like wildfire. Brands know they must be on the lookout now, and that faking it won't cut it. One of the reasons we've been so successful is that CEOs, founders and boards understand that it's critical to keep an eye on things and have this kind of support and perspective inside the organization.

How do you assess companies that hire you for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) consulting?

N.M.: We look at diversity, equity and inclusion as part of the larger corporate culture, and then meet companies where they are. Some companies and clients are very deep into this work and have been for years with a lot of internal expertise. Others really haven't thought about it and are just dipping their toe into the water. But while companies at the beginning of their journey have a lot to learn, the fact that they're having a conversation with us is an enormous first step.

But they must be willing to do the hard work...

N.M.: Our best clients are curious, interested, open and willing to look at themselves and see how they can improve. We talk, but we really listen. We focus on education and think how to engage employees at all levels of the organization. We want to avoid the top-down imposition of a new program.

I use a garden analogy. It's only going to live and thrive if you tend to it. You can't just come in, plant some things, then never look after them. If a company's 'effort' is one DEI training session that never gets talked about again, that's not tending to your garden.

What is performative allyship and does it make companies afraid to step into DEI for fear of getting called out?

N.M.: Performative allyship means pretending to care. This can be deliberate, or maybe you just think you're doing enough because you don't have education around the issue. Maybe there's not a lot of diversity at the company so there's a bit of an echo chamber—the same people are talking to the same people and the issues aren't getting raised—and you can step into a messy situation.

We don't do traditional PR, but we sometimes get pretty involved in the outward-facing marketing materials, like campaign images and other initiatives that brands are putting out there, to look at them through a lens of inclusivity.

This can apply to [sustainability](#) issues too. A company comes out with a small sustainable capsule collection and they're really proud of it. But then the public says, 'Well ok, but what about the other 99 percent of your line?'

N.M.: Absolutely. Cancel culture is a real thing. Companies need to be responsible, and there's nothing wrong with holding companies accountable. That said, it can be counterproductive if shaming and criticism don't allow for learning and growth.

To your point, we've seen that in environmental issues and the people/culture side of ESG and it's made our work very sought after. I've personally been through many crises with different clients, so I know how challenging it is to be in those environments with a world spotlight on you.

It's very daunting, but it starts with education and having humility that we are all on a learning journey. With some of the bigger issues that have come out across social media, often there's a lack of understanding or a lack of willingness to be open. That that makes a huge difference.

How did owning your sustainable luxury retail popup [Figure Eight](#) inform your perspective?

N.M.: We carried only sustainable products, and it was a constant assessment as to what was considered sustainable and what wasn't. I always felt that the best positioning was to be open and to say, 'I'm doing my best. I'm trying. This is where I think it works.' But it's also about being open to saying, 'Oh, okay, I see your point. That's interesting. I'm happy to learn from

that and decide whether I think that that makes sense for this business.’ It was a fantastic experience, but I found that for me, I’m better behind the scenes than out in front.

What do you think is the most urgent fashion problem now that needs fixing?

N.M.: How to stop harming the planet by creating less waste. But how do you drive revenue and sell product if you can’t create product? One word: resale! And not just as a sustainability side project but really viewing it as another commercial pillar to drive revenue. With [resale](#), as a brand, you have a say in how your product continues to live on on. You increase consumer touch points and validity. Who wouldn’t want to buy a pre-loved Gucci item from Gucci, with Gucci packaging and authenticity?