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MARC KARIMZADEH

# WORDS WITH (FASHION) FRIENDS: LISA GURWITCH



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Lisa Gurwitch has served as President and CEO of Delivering Good since 2015. A non-profit, Delivering Good brings together retailers, manufacturers, foundations and individuals to provide new merchandise — apparel, accessories, shoes, toys, books, and more — to those affected by poverty and natural disasters. It’s an important mission that Gurwitch, who is well-versed in philanthropy and charity, has taken on. A lawyer by training, she was previously Senior Vice President, Institutional Advancement/External Relations for World Learning, and had an 18-year tenure at the Jewish Community Endowment Fund of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties.

We checked in with her about Delivering Good, how philanthropy has evolved, and her goals.

### **What attracted you to Delivering Good?**

and children's industries, we provide new, essential merchandise that is needed by individuals facing poverty and natural disasters. The entrepreneurial spirit of this non-profit organization and the stellar and engaged business leaders who serve on our board provide endless opportunities for impact. I continue to be impressed with the board's vision, in successfully merging two charities, Kids In Distressed Situations and Fashion Delivers a few years ago, and in rebranding in 2017.

### **Tell us about the philosophy behind Delivering Good.**

At the heart of Delivering Good's philosophy is the belief that by taking action on a common cause, individual people and companies can, and should, make a meaningful difference in the world. We know that there are challenges in society that none of us can solve alone: long-term poverty, homelessness, and disaster recovery to name just a few. By bringing our collective resources together, we can effect real impact on these problems. We may not be able to bring an immediate end to poverty, but we can help to better the lives of millions of individuals. That's why Delivering Good works with companies and individuals across industries to put new products into the hands of those most in need in communities across the globe. When donors engage together in a shared mission, we can change lives. Our relationships also enable us to mobilize product support quickly in times of disaster.

In addition, in today's world, the consumer plays a significant role in influencing business to give back, and the charitable profile of companies motivates the public's brand loyalty.

Finally, individual consumers' financial support for our work is a critical piece to make it possible for us to always be "delivering good."

### **Since you joined, has there been one specific moment that truly touched you and demonstrated what Delivering Good is about?**

Last month, I met a couple who had just arrived in New York from Puerto Rico. They had been without running water and electricity for most of the past three months, and she's expecting their first child. They arrived without coats, one sweater for each of them, and it's December! We know that they face a challenging road ahead

clothes to get them started on the journey ahead.

### **Has the urgency to help changed? What are the most important areas of need at this moment?**

While the needs of people living in long-term poverty and disadvantaged circumstances are central to our mission at Delivering Good, 2017 has posed a special challenge in the form of many large and widespread natural disasters across the world: hurricanes that struck with devastating force in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and other islands in the Caribbean, wildfires that continue to rage in Northern California, and massive earthquakes that took a heavy toll on communities in Mexico. Just looking at hurricanes alone, this year was the worst season since 2005, and took more than 100 lives, while impacting millions more.

Families struck by disaster face not only the immediate needs of survival, but also the long-term challenges of recovery, as they rebuild their lives over the course of months and years. It's important that not only organizations like Delivering Good but also committed individuals remain dedicated to supporting these families as they work to repair the damage from this past year. We are proud to continue our work in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, Northern California, and beyond, and have been gratified to have had hundreds of new product donors this year.

### **How in your view has philanthropy/charity evolved over the past decade?**

We have seen greater democratization in the philanthropic world over the past five years. Social media has motivated more individuals to become more engaged who might otherwise not have considered giving to nonprofits. And at the same time, those media platforms have allowed them to become active partners alongside the organizations they care about.

As a result, it is no longer just Philanthropists (with a capital "P") who support these causes. A new generation of young people is passionately committed to seeing change happen in the world. A good example is the amazing response we've had in a partnership with Bethenny Frankel, the entrepreneur and television star. She's

## What is your five-year goal at Delivering Good?

To not only secure a steady stream of necessities for the children, families, and individuals around the world who need them most, but to develop a community of companies that manufacture quality product specifically for donation. We can't just rely on excess inventory. We also hope to build on the tremendous individual financial donor disaster response that we have experienced this year to support the needs that exist around us every day. When both consumers and business are invested and mobilized in an organized fashion — on every level from major manufacturers and retailers to the small designer, the start-up enterprise, and the individual shopper — we will have changed the culture around what it means to create a more equitable world.

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