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## Barneys' Daniella Vitale Talks to the Future

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Daniella Vitale (rear center) with YMA FSF interns.

Photo By Courtesy Photo

“If there is a great opportunity, take it,” Daniella Vitale, Barneys New York chief operating officer and senior executive vice president, urged the 16 interns who came to Barneys headquarters last week for a Breakfast With the Boss.

“Take the promotion. Take the opportunity and later decide what you want to do,” even if it’s not your ideal job, Vitale advised.

Barneys was the latest installment of the Breakfast With the Boss program. It's organized by the YMA Fashion Scholarship Fund, so

college and graduate students from around the country can meet retail and fashion leaders. YMA FSF sponsors the students in New York City for the summer, funding their room and board, arranging the internships and assigning them mentors, along with an array of educational programs about the fashion industry. The internships are at a variety of companies, from Kenneth Cole to Calvin Klein to Morgan Stanley.

Aside from sharing the wisdom of her career experience, Vitale spoke about Barneys' future. She also said Barneys is converting all of its freestanding Co-op stores to Barneys New York; that online growth will continue to accelerate and that Barneys' online business has "quadrupled" since she joined Barneys in December 2010; that Barneys will continue to renovate stores, and will upgrade servers and systems for point-of-sale, CRM and planning.

Vitale gave an honest overview of her job path, explaining that she always wanted to work with product, but not necessarily the product she got assigned to, like men's shoes at Salvatore Ferragamo. Not her first choice. But her point was that the experience paid off and led to better jobs. At Giorgio Armani, she said the designer had his hands in just about everything, from the marketing to licensing to window displays. "It taught me a very valuable lesson: that everything we do is ultimately retail. If it doesn't sell, it doesn't matter. If your margins aren't great, it doesn't matter. We looked at everything in terms of the performance at retail."

It wasn't until she landed a job at Gucci as director of wholesale in 1999 that she had the "all-encompassing" product opportunity that she dreamed about. "We looked at all categories as an equal opportunity."

She called Barneys "the culmination of all the things I did in my career," which included stints at Montaldo's and Frederick Atkins early on, and she suggested how relevant her brand experience is to her now, working on the retail side. While Barneys carries 700 brands, "Everyone is important," Vitale said. "It's very much about relationships. They trust us because we have been there."