

Brooks Brothers
Kimberly Lesslie
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Summary by Sarah Rundbaken

College Graduates of 2020 and 2021 can relate to those of 2008. Despite being a decade apart, the job market is comparable. Millions have lost their jobs in response to a collapse in the market generating difficulty for those beginning their careers. Kimberly Lesslie is a graduate of Fisher College located in Boston. She painted a picture of what it is like to enter the fashion industry during uncertain times. Holding various positions at fashion retailers has allowed her to flourish in her visual merchandising career. Kimberly stressed the importance of connections in the industry and how this has led her to working at Brooks Brothers for three years.

The fashion industry is rich in culture and history. Brooks Brothers is the oldest clothing retailer and the first men's ready-to-wear company in the United States, dating back to the early 19th century. The company itself has overcome various economic challenges throughout many decades such as the Great Depression, the market collapse of 2008, and the current Covid-19 pandemic. Brooks Brothers' consumers value the quality of the apparel, which prior to the pandemic had been manufactured partially in the United States as well as in offshore facilities.

Your first suit holds sentimental value, as it is a representation of adulthood. Often this is the apparel you would wear when interviewing and landing your first job. It signifies a good first impression at your place of work. Brooks Brothers represents success through its suits, as they are often purchased by politicians and presidents. Abraham Lincoln had been wearing a black Brooks Brothers suit the day of his assassination. Due to this tragedy, the company no longer manufactures suits in black. The pride of Brooks Brothers is rooted in its deep history and respect from its loyal clientele who continuously purchase from the business.

In order to generate growth, they have adapted to the times as well as the new generation of consumers entering the workforce. They have done so by expanding their product lines to athleisure. Athleisure has quickly become the company's top selling collection. Brooks Brothers has set a goal to generate excitement among the young consumers by revisiting classic pieces by adding trending aesthetics, while also staying true to the trademark look of the brand.

The pandemic created unprecedented financial issues, requiring brick-and-mortar locations to close for five or more months. This unforeseen circumstance required the company to file for chapter 11 bankruptcy and prepare to be purchased by a larger conglomerate. This ultimately led to a purchase by SPARC Group - the owner of Nautica, Aeropostale, and Forever 21. Since this change the brick-and-mortar locations have seen a fifty to sixty percent decrease in foot traffic, yet are hopeful that with the rollout of the vaccine, foot traffic will increase.

Similar to Kimberly, we all strive to be passionate and fulfilled within our work. Networking, although difficult to accomplish in our current virtual setting, is immensely important in order to find growth throughout our careers. Whether that be through family, friends, LinkedIn, or online groups, it is still possible. It is vital to recognize that although someone may not be able to offer you a job, they are likely able to offer experience or mentoring and one must take advantage of that opportunity. This will be valuable for future work. Furthermore, it is important to focus on future industry innovations such as the increase in e-commerce and gain skills in those areas. When competing for a position, having supplementary capabilities may be instrumental to your future success.