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## SERIAL ENTREPRENEUR LAUREN MAILLIAN ON DIFFERENCE AS THE DRIVER OF GROWTH

The entrepreneur, investor and strategic advisor writes about what the world's most influential brands have in common

By Lauren Maillian. Published on March 10, 2025.



*Ad Age is marking **Women's History Month** with a series of contributions from guest essayists. Today, **Lauren Maillian**, serial entrepreneur, investor and strategic advisor, writes about what the world's most influential brands have in common.*

Since the age of 19, I have done what society didn't envision women doing—I've been building global brands, brands that have shaped industries, defined luxury and influenced consumer expectations worldwide. From co-founding a vineyard (making me the youngest self-made winery owner) to advising some of the most recognizable companies today, I have always championed women and made space for them to rise along the way.

So with this wealth of experience, I can say without a doubt that the world will always be complicated in the sense that expectations for quality will always be high. And yet, consumers have immense tolerance for what is truly great—great products, great experiences, great brands. What they don't tolerate? Mediocrity.

You cannot build a brand on a wash-rinse-repeat cycle. You cannot create lasting influence through a myopic lens. Yet many leaders fall into this trap, relying on outdated strategies, excluding perspectives that could elevate their brand, and failing to recognize that in a global economy, a narrow view is a death sentence.

Luxury brands understand this deeply. The world's most renowned fashion houses draw inspiration from global cultures. Five-star hotels cater to diverse clientele, ensuring their experiences resonate across continents. The most successful consumer brands continuously evolve, integrating fresh perspectives and adapting to shifting demands. They know that leadership in branding requires openness to influence, an appreciation for nuance and the ability to translate global insights into local impact.

As a founder, investor and advisor, I've navigated branding from every angle. Before I built companies, I walked the runways of global fashion brands. Before I became an award-winning marketer, I understood influence not just as a strategy but as a lived experience. Before the term *brand-building* became an industry buzzword, I was executing it across multiple sectors, proving that adaptability is the foundation of

However, what perplexes me today is the resistance to global perspective in marketing, storytelling and advertising that can attract a bigger audience. Many marketers who are changing course on inclusion are those who simultaneously take pride in their international travel. The same individuals who view it as a luxury to experience different cultures abroad often fail to see the value of integrating diverse perspectives back home into their marketing and advertising work—or leave it for a region-specific approach when it could be an inclusive game-changer for accelerated growth right here at home. You cannot celebrate exposure to the world while rejecting the inclusive spirit that powers the very essence of what makes global branding powerful.

That's not what true brand leadership is. We must understand that the world's most influential brands are built with a vision that extends beyond borders, beyond immediate markets and beyond a singular way of thinking. Women don't just generate ideas, we execute, build, invest and pursue success—often unapologetically to prove how serious we intend to win.

I have always believed that the true power of global marketing and advertising lies in authentically representing the culturally, ethnically and racially diverse perspectives that shape the world. Whether working with clients to capture new market share, accelerating the growth of bold and innovative startups, helping Fortune 500 companies expand into new frontiers, leading a media company as president or launching The New C-Suite with Cosmopolitan, I've always known that difference is the driver of growth—and my book, "The Path Redefined," drives home my business philosophy.

This broad worldview and my experience in business over the past 20 years is why the newest edition of "The Path Redefined" is the roadmap for ambitious working women. Each experience and perspective shapes how we view opportunities, challenges and what life has to offer us as people, professionals and those in pursuit of greatness.

So unless individuals, businesses, corporations and industries driving economic advancement embrace the complexity of difference, welcome the challenge of innovation and refuse to settle for mediocrity, the world may never be shaped enough for itself. Let's keep telling bold stories with the richness of all the world has to offer marketers, advertisers and consumers alike.