

TAKING CHARGE

After CUTTING her teeth on the shop floor for CULT PARISIEN brand DIPTYQUE, Australian-born AMANDA MORGAN climbed the RANKS to become its MANAGING DIRECTOR across the UK and Ireland. She shares with BAZAAR the LESSONS she's LEARNED along the way

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When it comes to landing your dream job, persistence pays, as Amanda Morgan's career trajectory goes to show. Hailing from Victoria, Morgan arrived in London in 2004 and immediately began cold-calling brands she loved – including, most fortuitously, the team managing the UK distribution for Diptyque, the French fragrance and candles house that opened its first boutique on Paris' Boulevard Saint-Germain in 1961 and whose wares, adorned with their signature monochromatic “dancing letters” motifs, are shorthand for good taste the world over.

“They didn't really have anything that I was suitable for, but I kept hustling them for a job,” Morgan laughs. “I just said, ‘I'm happy to do anything’. There was a sales role at [iconic London department store] Liberty, so I started on the shop floor.”

Her doggedness continued to be rewarded: Morgan went on to manage Diptyque's Notting Hill store and then was named area manager, all within the space of four months. In the following years came stints as country manager and Diptyque's American managing director, before scoring her current position of managing director of UK and Ireland, a

post she's held since 2010. “This is my 21st year with the brand,” she notes fondly.

Morgan was raised on the family farm in the town of Nagambie in Victoria's Goulburn Valley. “I was exposed to that entrepreneurial spirit of working and

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making things happen – always finding solutions,” she recalls. “Having that background led me to where I am now.”

She moved to Melbourne to study a Bachelor of Arts at Deakin University before joining the now-defunct multi-department e-commerce platform Wishlist Holdings. “At the start of the 2000s, it was [the] e-commerce boom,”

says Morgan. “[The company was] incredibly entrepreneurial, with a real startup mentality.”

She headed to London in her late twenties, where her rapid career ascent overlaid an equally steep learning curve. “[Before becoming country manager], I didn't know what a P&L [profit and loss statement] was and, all of a sudden, I had to navigate financial topics [without] a business-school background. We were a very small team, we had one store only – you kind of did everything at that time. I had to be curious [and] self-educate.”

In 2010, Morgan was anointed managing director and then took on the same role in an interim capacity for Diptyque's US operations. “It should have been a few weeks or months, but it turned into almost a year,” she says of her work in the US, which she juggled with her role back in London. “I was basically two weeks here, two weeks there.”

Diptyque's parent company, private equity firm Manzanita Capital, acquired a majority stake in Swedish niche fragrance brand Byredo in 2013 and Morgan – in tandem with her position at Diptyque – was named as its UK managing director. A highlight of her tenure came when the

brand opened the doors to its London flagship, a striking three-storey townhouse in Soho, in 2018. She stayed in the role until 2022, when Spanish luxury conglomerate Puig acquired a majority stake in Byredo (then valued at US\$1.15 billion).

Morgan's period helming Diptyque has seen the brand weather a number of what she calls "complicated global challenges", including Brexit and the COVID pandemic. Disastrous setbacks to some, perhaps, but Morgan has tended to welcome the difficulties her job has thrown at her. "Sometimes it's the challenges that I would look at [as career highlights] because I can see I've had to figure things out and then they've [led to success]."

Her tenure at the brand has corresponded with significant company growth. "We're now 35 [staff] in the head office and almost 100 on shop floors," says Morgan. When she became the managing director, Diptyque had only one standalone store in the UK; it now boasts 118 physical retail touchpoints in the UK and eight boutiques – including its Maison Diptyque London, an atmospheric retail and cultural space located in a three-storey townhouse in Mayfair – alongside a thriving e-commerce platform.

As a leader, Morgan collaborates with specialists from a range of disciplines. "I know that I absolutely don't have all the expertise needed to be able to do such a role," she acknowledges. "I quite enjoy being collaborative. I think it's Diptyque's culture to try and be more open and linear in how we operate."

Although she's now spent more than two decades in London, Morgan's Australian roots continue to serve her well. "If you're not from somewhere originally, you have to work that bit harder to prove yourself," she says.

On a related note, she has noticed a reluctance among expat Australians to celebrate their own successes. "It might be a cultural thing," she ponders. "I don't really love to be in the spotlight. I probably should be prouder about what I have achieved over here. I guess, as Aussies, we just get on with things."

Morgan draws inspiration from the many brilliant women around her. "Our CEO [Laurence Semichon] and brand

president [Fabienne Mauny] are both women," she says. "Many founders of lifestyle or wellness brands I love are women. My mum is a strong and creative woman – [they're] all inspirational to me in different ways."

As for the advice she might give to herself if she were just starting out, Morgan is unequivocal.

"Learn to be patient and don't underestimate yourself," she says. "Most

people in leadership roles learn things along the way – some just show more confidence than others.

"People often ask me, 'What do you have to have to work for a brand like Diptyque?'" she continues. "I think it comes [down to] just being passionate about the brand and [having] curiosity. That goes a long way."

A very long way, indeed, as Morgan's story proves. HB

