



LYNNE KOPLIN JOINS J BRAND AS PRESIDENT

By Kbanh T.L. Tran

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LOS ANGELES — As J Brand lays the groundwork to build its wholesale business with more product extensions and open its first freestanding store, the company has named apparel industry veteran Lynne Koplin president.

Jeff Rudes, who founded the firm 10 years ago, remains chief executive officer.

Koplin, the former president of True Religion Apparel Inc., is bringing her experience as a merchandiser and planner to better organize the 230-person company and its growing portfolio of products, which are all made in Los Angeles and shipped worldwide. Now owned by Tokyo-based Fast Retailing Co., J Brand is looking to expand classifications, such as women's T-shirts.

"It's not just about sales and great product design; it's about merchandising and planning the business effectively," said Koplin. "I will also manage the sales team, both domestically and internationally."

Before leaving True Religion in December, Koplin held a series of roles at the rival firm, including chief operating officer, president, interim ceo and chief merchandising officer, during a three-year tenure that was marked by TowerBrook Capital Partners' \$835 million acquisition of the Vernon, Calif.-based denim company in July and the departure of True Religion founder Jeffrey Lubell.

Earlier, she served as president of Tommy Bahama's women's division, ran the swim license for Tommy Bahama at Apparel Ventures and managed the Anne Cole line and designer business at Warnaco. As J Brand's ceo, Rudes will continue to oversee finance, design, marketing and public relations. He also has a vision for growth, although details remain sketchy.

"Retail is in our sights. When and where, we don't know yet," he said. "Men's [sportswear] is in the future, absolutely. Accessories, of course."

Meanwhile, the shop-in-shop strategy is working for J Brand. In Japan, it's opened four in department stores such as Isetan and Hankyu, with another set to launch by the end of the year. Koplin's retail experience at True Religion can be useful.

"At my last stint, it had a lot to do with transitioning a business that was predominantly wholesale to retail," she said. "It was a comparable evolution. To really understand an assortment that is right for wholesale accounts and for retail shop-in-shop, that takes retail expertise."