

Meet Famous Footwear's New Woman in Power

BY [KATIE ABEL](#)



Molly Adams, Famous Footwear's incoming president, will begin work May 29.

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The diversification of talent at the top has never been more critical — and [Caleres Inc.](#) and [Diane Sullivan](#) are leading the way in elevating female executives.

Today the St. Louis-based company revealed that Famous Footwear's new president is [Molly Adams](#), who has been EVP of global merchandising and product development at The Walt Disney Co. since 2008.

Adams, who will join Caleres on May 29 and [succeed retiring chief Rick Ausick](#), takes the reins of its largest division. In 2017, Famous Footwear racked up \$1.6 billion in sales, which accounted for 59 percent of the revenue in the company's portfolio.

Caleres' newest woman in power will be charged with focusing on consumer engagement, store productivity and omnichannel initiatives. At Disney, Adams led two multibillion-dollar business areas and a combined global merchandising and product development team.

"We thought long and hard about how the consumer is changing, how retail is changing — and what kind of leadership we would need for this next phase of growth at Famous Footwear. It will be driven so much by consumer insight, analytics and great merchandise," said Sullivan, CEO, president and chairman of Caleres. "Molly's leadership, pace and vision will be invaluable to our Famous Footwear business, and her passion around the consumer experience will come to life in our stores and through our dedicated team."



Diane Sullivan

CREDIT: MARK MANN

Sullivan said that as she has continued to build the executive team at the company, it's been critical to think about how to add people who are different, and bring fresh perspectives to the company. The exec, who worked with Kirk Palmer Associates on the president's search, said there was a great amount of interest in the role. "We met with some amazing people," she said.

In addition to being a strong leader, Adams is a "fantastic person," Sullivan said. "We want to have leaders who build an environment and empower people. Molly is nice, she's fun, and she's a great communicator. She's going to craft a great vision for Famous."

For her part, Adams said in a statement that she was drawn to the role because of the opportunity to be involved in a fast-paced and evolving business. "I grew up in retail and love the idea of building world-class brands with strong emotional consumer connections," she said. "I see a lot of exciting and challenging prospects on that front with Famous Footwear, and I'm confident in the great team in place supporting the business."

Prior to Disney, Adams had experience with private equity-owned and smaller companies in retail and entertainment. She spent eight years at Anchor Blue Retail group as SVP, GMM and DMM. In addition, Adams served as president of Stony Apparel Corp., a designer and manufacturer of juniors' and kids' fashion apparel. She also held a variety of retail positions early in her career at major department stores and specialty retail stores.

Adams' appointment is just one example of Sullivan's push to [cultivate female leadership](#) in the top ranks. Last year, Caleres reached [gender parity on its board](#), with more than 50 percent of the seats held by women.

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