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Meet The Woman Driving Sustainability And Corporate Responsibility At Tiffany & Co.



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Leading sustainability for a global brand is not only challenging, but requires knowledge of the entire organization. And then adding to the task is the additional job of running a major corporate foundation. For most companies, these demanding leadership roles are held by separate people, but at Tiffany & Co., [Anisa Kamadoli Costa](#) does both. And there's a reason for it. We spoke with Kamadoli Costa to find out how she ended up with two jobs, and how the synergy between the Foundation and the company has helped drive Tiffany & Co.'s sustainability goals forward.

Your background is originally in international relations and then you moved to work in the financial services sector. How did you find yourself in luxury goods? And what are the threads that helped you move from one sector to another?

It's been an interesting journey to say the least, but I think I'm right where I belong. Graduating with my masters from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) provided a strong foundation for understanding global challenges and strategies for solving them. Working in finance and private philanthropy helped me develop a strong grasp of business issues and stakeholder engagement. My current job leading The Tiffany & Co. Foundation and corporate sustainability initiatives at Tiffany & Co. weaves these themes together. It allows me to bring my multidisciplinary background to an industry that inherently values quality, longevity, heritage and beauty, and to a company with a rich history in sustainable luxury.



What is the role of the corporation in driving social change? And how does the Foundation support or help drive change in a different way?

The corporation and Foundation play distinct yet synergistic roles. Let me give you an example regarding our commitment to protecting the environment. On the corporate side, Tiffany was proud to join a coalition of companies working together to galvanize climate action leading up to and following COP21 by aspiring to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The company is also committed to protecting the integrity of our supply chain and obtaining materials in ways that are socially and environmentally responsible. For us, it's about more than following global standards – we're committed to proactively advocating for preservation efforts in everything we do.

The Foundation, which is a separate legal entity from the Company, supports our wider commitment to preservation through grantmaking. We provide funding to nonprofit organizations working to advance the fields of responsible mining, coral and marine conservation as well as the creation and beautification of urban parks – something that's near and dear to my heart as a native New Yorker. The Foundation is just 15 years old, and I'm proud that we've been able to award over \$65 million in grants so far.

Your position is unique in that you serve as both Chief Sustainability Officer for Tiffany & Co. and Chairman and President of The Tiffany & Co. Foundation. How do you balance the two?

I'm not going to pretend that holding two positions isn't demanding or that there aren't any challenges involved. That said, I think the situation is in many ways advantageous, particularly because the Foundation's grantmaking efforts are closely aligned with the company's sustainability initiatives. With a focus on environmental conservation, the Foundation can amplify Tiffany's reach and positive impact beyond the luxury industry and our supply chain. Having a seat at both the company table and the Foundation table allows my teams to drive more holistic, collaborative and complementary solutions. I think many companies could benefit from a more integrated approach to philanthropy.

You mentioned that climate is a priority for Tiffany, and it's obviously high on the global agenda at the moment. What else do you feel people should be talking about?

Oceans! And not just because my favorite color is blue. Of course ocean health connects to climate conversations, but it also speaks to a range of other topics and industries beyond purely conservation of the environment, like food security, shipping industries and scientific innovation. It's truly a global challenge that is continuing to get more attention, but still nowhere near enough. The issue can seem overwhelming – the oceans are vast and it's easy to feel like there's not much you can do to help mitigate the threats. But the key is to carve out your niche. On our end, Tiffany & Co. has had a longstanding commitment to protecting coral. Over 10 years ago, we made the decision to eliminate coral from our jewelry. On the Foundation side, we award grants to nonprofits that are working to protect coral reefs through research, education and the creation of marine protected areas (MPAs). I am so thrilled to see this global movement building around MPAs and the oceans. As a lifelong lover of water – my mother grew up on the Indian coast, by the Arabian Sea – oceans are a resource I truly treasure and one we all need to take action to protect.



Is there any career advice you've received that has been particularly helpful?

One of the best pieces of career advice I received early on was to follow your passions. If you believe passionately in what you are doing and whom you are doing it with, success is bound to follow. Also, travel and expose yourself to as many different types of people as possible – and not just during your vacation time. At Tiffany, one of the most rewarding things I've done is visit the people who make up our supply chain, such as the men and women who cut and polish Tiffany diamonds in Botswana and Mauritius. There's nothing like the power of human connection to give purpose to your work and help you understand the value of multiple perspectives.

The Foundation has been operating for 15 years. What are some of the highlights that you're most proud of?

I could go on and on about the amazing grantees we've been able to support. From Pew's Global Ocean Legacy to Friends of the High Line to Trout Unlimited, the Foundation's grants have helped empower organizations to protect our most precious resources, create incredible urban spaces and ensure responsible mining. But I think what I'm most proud of is not just how much we give or who we give to but *how* we give. In the past 15 years, we've shown that corporate philanthropy is a critical piece of sustainability – not some siloed grant-giving arm. Our Foundation work is deeply connected to what the company is doing, and it's a model that our team can truly be proud of.

What's next for Tiffany & Co. on the sustainability front?

With the strong support of our CEO, Frédéric Cumenal, we'll continue to accelerate our sustainability progress and industry leadership. From taking bold action on climate change to supporting organizations working to protect biodiversity and precious land and seascapes, we'll continue to use the full power of the Tiffany brand to challenge the status quo, drive meaningful change and set the standard for sustainable luxury. Luxury and sustainability are, after all, deeply linked. Both are about heritage, quality and preserving beauty for generations to come.

Disclaimer: The Tiffany & Co. Foundation works with McPherson Strategies on communications activities.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanmcpherson/2016/01/25/meet-the-woman-driving-sustainability-and-corporate-responsibility-at-tiffany-co/#4fd2b2275b61>