

**INTRODUCING**  
**LESLIE BLODGETT**  
**EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN OF**  
**BARE ESSENTUALS,**  
**CREATOR OF BAREMINERALS**

# BARE ESSENTUALS

## LESLIE BLODGETT

### CREATOR OF BAREMINERALS & EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, BARE ESSENTUALS

A visionary recognized by Inc. Magazine as one of the “Top Entrepreneurs of the Decade: 2000-2009,” Leslie Blodgett has single-handedly turned the beauty industry on its head by catapulting mineral makeup into the public eye, forever changing the conversation around beauty.

Joining Bare Escentuals as CEO in 1994, Leslie’s aptitude and discerning leadership style helped transform what was a local bath and body retailer into one of the leading prestige cosmetic companies in the United States with the launch of bareMinerals, an award-winning line of mineral-based products, including bareMinerals SPF 15 Foundation.

Blodgett’s solid background in product development, including positions at Neutrogena and Max Factor, coupled with her predisposition to intuit what women want while foreseeing trends are key factors that continue to propel her success and ever-growing popularity. This instinctual drive led her to QVC in 1997 with the simple purpose to educate women about bareMinerals and our untraditional approach to bare-skin beauty. Undaunted by the obstacle of selling foundation on TV, Blodgett’s passionate approach and authenticity resonated immediately with women nationwide that were looking for healthy makeup alternatives.

Thus, a makeup revolution was born and as word of mouth spread, so did Blodgett’s appeal. A renowned beauty expert sought-out by media sources on a global scale for her trademark style, Blodgett embodies a new level of influence. Blodgett “shuns the button-down, corporate approach of many of her peers, and speaks honestly—having long-ago checked her ego and pretense at the door.” – *Women’s Wear Daily*

Genuine to the core, Blodgett has been an advocate for community long before the advent of social media—personally responding to letters, emails and making house calls have been rituals from the beginning—and can be credited with spearheading a community-enabled approach; putting stock in the value of genuine, personal relationships and ultimately allowing women to have a much broader brand experience that is as much about a peer-to-peer community as it is about bareMinerals products.

In 2006, Blodgett took Bare Escentuals public in one of the largest cosmetic IPO’s in the last decade. Bare Escentuals is currently available in 29 countries with over 6,500 points of distribution, including more than 200 company-owned boutiques.

In 2012, Blodgett addressed Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) graduates, her alma mater, and was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree. In 2011, Blodgett joined the board of directors at Stella & Dot, the San Bruno-based accessories company that ranked 67 on the Inc. 500 list of fastest growing companies in 2010. Blodgett also serves on the board of Cosmetic Executive Women (CEW) and was the first recipient of the organization’s Achiever Award in 2006 for her contributions to the industry.

A true testament to Blodgett’s influence on the cosmetic industry at large, in 2010, Bare Escentuals was acquired by Shiseido, the Japan-based leading global cosmetics company, for \$1.8 billion making it one of the largest cosmetics mergers in history. Now, more than ever, Blodgett in her role of Executive Chairman is in position to fulfill her mission of bringing the company’s mineral-based products to even more women worldwide.

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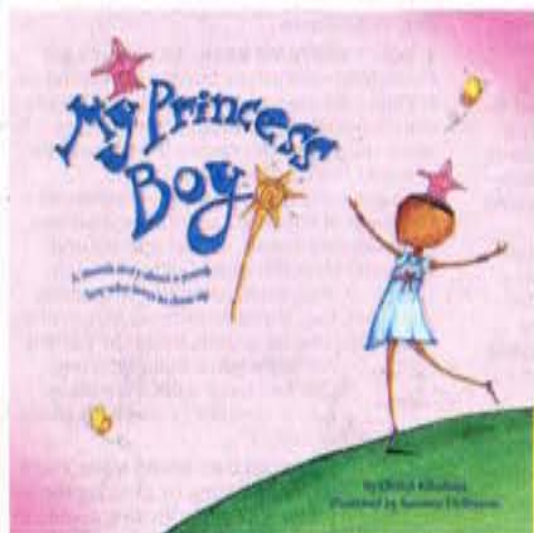
# LESLIE THROUGH THE YEARS

- 1994** — HELLO GORGEOUS. LESLIE BLODGETT JOINS BARE ESCENTUALS AS PRESIDENT AND CEO.
- 1995** — LESLIE LAUNCHES BAREMINERALS IN THE UNITED STATES.
- 1997** — IT'S SHOWTIME. LESLIE MAKES HER FIRST APPEARANCE ON QVC IN THE UNITED STATES TO INTRODUCE BAREMINERALS, WHICH SELLS OUT IN 6 MINUTES.
- 2000** — THE BE ADDICTS ONLINE FORUM IS CREATED.
- 2002** — FIRST BAREMINERALS INFOMERCIAL DEBUTS MAKING LESLIE A REGULAR PRESENCE IN HOUSEHOLDS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES.
- 2004** — LESLIE TAKES TO THE SEA WITH BARE ESCENTUALS FIRST CUSTOMER CRUISE.
- 2006** — LESLIE TAKES BARE ESCENTUALS PUBLIC IN ONE OF THE LARGEST COSMETIC IPO'S IN THE LAST DECADE.
- 2007** — LESLIE HITS THE ROAD WITH BARE ESCENTUALS INAUGURAL BUS TOUR ACROSS THE UNITED STATES.
- 2009** — LESLIE IS NAMED ONE OF THE "TOP ENTREPRENEURS OF THE DECADE: 2000-2009" BY INC. MAGAZINE.
- 2009** — SHE DOES IT AGAIN: BAREMINERALS MATTE SPF 15 FOUNDATION LAUNCHES AND WOMEN EVERYWHERE FALL IN LOVE WITH MATTE.
- 2009** — LESLIE JOINS FACEBOOK.
- 2010** — LESLIE IS NAMED EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, BARE ESCENTUALS. THIS SAME YEAR BARE ESCENTUALS BECOMES A PART OF SHISEIDO.

**NEW YORK TIMES**

**JUNE 12, 2011**





**ROLES** Parents seek advice on gender behavior.

## Toddling Past Gender Lines

By JAN HOFFMAN

A 3½-year-old named Harry was playing at home in Los Angeles recently when his father walked in with a Target shopping bag. Inside was a special gift for the little boy: a sparkly princess Barbie doll.

"You could hear the gasp of excitement," recounted Harry's mother, Lee. "It just made his whole world."

A year ago, Harry found Barbies abandoned by his two older sisters. He makes sure they are properly outfitted and worshipped regularly. The girls' cast-off dress-up clothes have become his go-to outfits. And when he arrives at preschool each morning, he selects a dress from the costume box and wears it through recess, even as he scrambles on the jungle gym.

At first, Harry's father had a hard time watching his son twirl around in princess wear. But his gift of the Barbie symbolized acceptance; Harry's joyous gasp indicated that the little boy intuitively understood. "We

Continued on Page 8

### CULTURAL STUDIES

## Twitter's Secret Handshake



**AN IDEA** Chris Messina invented the hashtag.

By ASHLEY PARKER

CHARLIE SHEEN'S meltdown took many forms: a cocaine-fueled rampage in a New York hotel room, an erratic radio rant, a vulgar one-man comedy tour. But his biggest contribution to current culture may have been more subtle. With a simple Twitter phrase, #winning, known in the parlance of social media as a hashtag, Mr. Sheen underscored one of the newest ways technology has changed how we communicate.

Hashtags, words or phrases preceded by the # symbol, have been popularized on Twitter as a way for users to organize and search messages. So, for instance, people tweeting about Representative Anthony D. Weiner might add the hashtag #Weinergate to their messages, and those curious about the latest developments in the scandal could simply search for #Weinergate. Or Justin Bieber fans might use #Bieber to

Continued on Page 6



PETER DA SILVA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

## Move Over, Estée Lauder

With her company's mineral-based products, Leslie Blodgett has changed how some women approach makeup, and has inspired a dedicated following in the process.

By MARTHA SHERRILL

SAN FRANCISCO

LESLIE BLODGETT'S color-splashed corner office on the 23rd floor overlooks the financial district, the cement-beige Ferry Building at the rim of the Embarcadero and, in the distance, the sullen grays of San Francisco Bay. The soaring panorama befits the high priestess of Bare Escentuals, a line of chemical-free mineral powders that have revolutionized the way millions of American women — particularly those under 40 — think about makeup.

Ms. Blodgett, a familiar face on QVC, has been compared to Max Factor, whose invention of pancake foundation swabbed on with a wet sponge in the 1930s transformed the cosmetics industry. Wander along the vanity aisle of any drugstore and Ms. Blodgett's influence is apparent, as giants like Revlon and L'Oréal have been compelled to come out

with their own mineral lines.

In her funky brown Gucci mules, straight Gap jeans, dappled-green scarf and blue jacket from Anthropologie, Ms. Blodgett, 48, hardly exuded the regal calm of an industry leader — or even the Zen-centeredness of her adopted Bay Area home. "I don't veg-out or chill," she said, wriggling in her seat like a child. At work, she is known for crazy marketing schemes and wackiness — she did the splits onstage at the beginning of an all-company meeting in April, and led a group dance to Rihanna's "Only Girl (In the World)" — not laid-back cool.

And perfectly groomed, creamy-smooth sentences are too much to ask. "I have trouble just talking," Ms. Blodgett said, with her slight, but oddly beguiling, speech impediment. "My vocabulary isn't large. I just keep saying 'amazing' and 'awesome.'"

An unlikely QVC star, she communicates in other ways, with her ex-

Continued on Page 6



# Move Over, Estée Lauder

From First Styles Page

pressive face and brown giant-orb eyes, which were surely created by a makeup god for liner and shadow. Her arms are always gesturing.

But let's zero in on the hands, the way the QVC camera does when she peddles the miracle minerals. Her manicure: short nails, clear polish. Her fingers: agile. The ring: an epic diamond surrounded by sapphires and emeralds, which, as Ms. Blodgett's social media followers know (it is the other way she communicates) was an early 20th anniversary present from Keith, her stay-at-home husband, and picked out at Tiffany's in New York in October. "Actually, we went into the store just to replace my wedding ring," he said in a phone interview, "but Leslie came out with that."

On QVC, Ms. Blodgett's appearances have the trance-inducing sensuality of a Dionysian ritual, as she applies foundation to a bare-faced woman. In the Bare Escentuals world, this is called a "make under." The minerals are light, almost translucent, and it is sometimes hard to know what, if anything, they are doing.

Ms. Blodgett's fingers grasp a small jar and twist off its black lid. A special brush appears (53 varieties are shown on the company's Web site) and soft bristles are swirled in minerals, which have now vanished from sight.

Swirl. Tap. Tap-tap. The brush is tapped on the edge of the lid. A trace of mineral smoke rises.

What comes next, like all things cosmetically radical, seems strange and scary and potentially the answer to your skin-care prayers. Ms. Blodgett gently sweeps the brush across the woman's face. In Bare Escentuals terminology, this is known as "buffing."

Not since Estée Lauder dabbed Youth-Dew behind the ears of thousands has a lone woman so influenced the beauty industry.

Last summer, in Lady Gaga's tour bus, Ms. Blodgett rolled across the East Coast on a 10-city tour, buffing initiates and meeting thousands of fans and self-described "BE addicts" who tape Ms. Blodgett's infomercials and confess on social networking sites that they are facing financial ruin from compulsive brush collecting. Women come with tearful testimonials (the product was originally marketed to those with rosacea and acne scars), and they are hungry for more tips.

Nothing is obvious, or easy, when transitioning to minerals. The conversion process is just that, a process.

"You have to explain this product almost the way you have to explain a person," Ms. Blodgett said. "I am not good at selling, really, I am just an explainer, an educator." She added: "It even took my mother a couple years to try it. I wasn't going to force it on her."

Ms. Blodgett's mother comes up a lot. She is like an off-camera guest presence on QVC. Ms. Blodgett's father, who died 11 years ago, was a science teacher with his own community television science show for children, and would seem to be the inspiration behind her own success on TV. But Ms. Blodgett said it was her mother, Sylvia Abualy — a 1970s feminist and home-economics teacher on Long Island at Smithtown High School West (which Ms. Blodgett attended) — who nagged her to success.

Ms. Abualy was a prototypical Tiger Mom, but of the Hungarian-Italian variety. "She pushed me, she gave me drive," said Ms. Blodgett, waving an old letter that she had brought to read. "I love her, and she was an amazing mother," adding "But if she wasn't such a bitch, I wouldn't be what I am today."

"Leslie was an easy middle child," said Ms. Abualy, sounding almost docile. Retired from teaching, she is now a photographer in Santa Barbara, Calif. "She was always able to set goals for herself. In seventh grade, Leslie announced that in two years she was going to go to the ninth-grade dance with the best-looking boy in the class. She thought he was really cute. And darned if she didn't."



TINA FREIBERG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



KIM WHITE/BLOOMBERG

## INFLUENTIAL

Clockwise from top, a Bare Escentuals display; Estée Lauder in 1961; Leslie Blodgett, the chief executive of Bare Escentuals.



GETTY IMAGES

Their mother-daughter problems came later, when Ms. Blodgett chose to study modern dance at the State University at Oswego, N.Y. ("I wasn't too happy about that," Ms. Abualy said) and dropped out after two years. In 1981, she was living in Plantation, Fla., and working as a waitress at a Ponderosa Steakhouse when her mother persisted that she apply to a cosmetic marketing program at Fashion Institute of Technology taught by Hazel Bishop, the inventor of a smudge-proof lipstick.

Ms. Blodgett unfolded the letter she received from her mother at that time.

Dear Leslie,

Consider what you will do if FIT doesn't work out for next fall. Do you have an alternative plan? You'd better think about it or you'll be working as a waitress all your life. How does that sound?

That's all for now.

Love,

Mom

Ms. Blodgett was already a seasoned cosmetic industry executive (and wearing pancake) when she stumbled onto the minerals in a road-to-Damascus way in 1994. Her résumé was a groaning pile of brand names. She had spritzed Estée Lauder fragrances while studying at FIT, and worked the Ultima II counter at Macy's Herald Square wearing as many as eight shades of eye shadow at once. ("The 1980s were all about color," she said.) An internship at Revlon led to product development at Max Factor, where she worked on colorless mascara.

"I loved creative marketing," Ms. Blodgett said, "product development, and I was a color expert — on shades and skin tone and blending."

When Procter & Gamble bought Revlon in 1991, she and Mr. Blodgett, who was producing corporate films and commercials when they married, relocated to Baltimore, where their son Trent was born. ("That's when my career really

died," Mr. Blodgett said.) Unhappy in Maryland, Ms. Blodgett took a job with Neutrogena in Los Angeles before a friend of a friend called, offering her a chance to rescue a failing business in the Bay Area, a string of natural body care and aromatherapy boutiques with the forgettable name Bare Escentuals.

Ms. Blodgett was busy repackaging the body products when she turned her attention to the "mineral" makeup sold in the boutiques.

It was finely ground powder, the consistency of confectioner's sugar, dry but weirdly creamy. "I knew it was remarkable right away," she said. "But I could see it would be complicated to sell. There was a huge learning curve."

Made with only five natural ingredients, it was far less likely to cause skin irritations or breakouts, and didn't contain the questionable chemicals commonly found in most makeup. "Here we are," she said, "spending time growing organic vegetables or going to the farmers' market, but otherwise exposing ourselves to all kinds of bad stuff."

Ms. Blodgett fiddled with the formula, tweaked the colors and settled on four hues. (There are 40 now.) She named the makeup line BareMinerals. "It wasn't a Cinderella story," she said. "It wasn't overnight." An expensive New York debut in 1995 generated only one article, in *W. Sales* were so bad that Ms. Blodgett began shuttering boutiques.

But the hours she clocked as a desperate insomniac paid off. In the middle of the night, she watched QVC and thought, "I could do that." A year after

she approached the shopping channel, she went on wearing a white suit and a fake \$29 five-carat diamond. The minerals were natural, but the hippie thing had limited appeal.

"I would never have tried the stuff if it weren't part of my job," said Lisa Robertson, a former Miss Tennessee and Loretta Young lookalike who is Ms. Blodgett's on-air partner on QVC. "I wore full-on hard-core liquid foundation, like everybody else, my whole life. I thought: 'Minerals? What? Don't even go there.' The first time I tried it, I

*'I am not good at selling, really. I am just an explainer.'*

didn't think it was working. I wondered, Emperor's New Clothes?"

Much has been made of the success that followed. Ms. Blodgett's first appearance wiped out her supply. In her second appearance, she sold \$180,000 of foundation in 10 minutes. Before long, she was selling \$1.4 million an hour.

QVC notified her that she was being talked about all over their message boards. "We knew we really had something," said Ms. Blodgett, who logged onto the forum and wrote to customers directly.

Women who were confused or disappointed got even more attention. "After we'd do a show, she would stay up late, for hours on the computer," Ms. Robertson said. "Before Facebook or MySpace, she was doing social media. It was pretty intense."

Detractors may wonder what the big deal is, but they cannot deny the revolution Ms. Blodgett created, the multi-billion-dollar industry, or the generation of women who, having grown up with loose powder, are not likely to switch to pancake or liquid any time soon. The copycatting has been amazing.

"Bound to happen," Ms. Blodgett said with a shrug. "When everyone I knew — my family, my brother — started sending me links to every new mineral line, and there were hundreds, 'Hey, did you see this,' that's when it got irritating."

Nobody but Bare Escentuals has Ms. Blodgett, who sometimes seems more popular than her products. Last year, when the company was acquired for \$1.7 billion by Shiseido, one of the largest takeovers in cosmetic industry history, one of the conditions was that Ms. Blodgett continue, not just as "chairman," as she calls herself, but actively involved as the face of the brand.

But as the minerals head to Asia and Brazil, as planned, and Bare Escentuals expands into skin care (made with something called Active Soil, which seems meant to trigger jokes about washing your face with dirt), how do you sell a character like Ms. Blodgett?

"Leslie can't be everywhere, and all over the world," said Simon Cowell, who is in charge of global marketing and communications (and not the singing judge). "So how do we work it? We want to infuse Leslie's spirit into the brand, her sense of humor, and make the brand even more approachable."

Recently on QVC, Ms. Blodgett appeared in white pants and a tropical-print tunic for a selling blitz of Faux Tan, her sunless tanning minerals. Lying on a white shag carpet, she and Ms. Robertson applied bronzing powder to a model's bare legs. Application, as usual, required a specialty brush so big it looked like something you would groom a horse with, or wax a car.

"No snakeskin, no streaking!" Ms. Robertson called out from the rug. "Never wears weird!"

Swirling, tap-tapping, and the rhythmic buffing of the model's legs continued until Ms. Blodgett and Ms. Robertson looked like participants in a soft-core brush-porn fantasy. After five minutes, more than 1,200 kits of Faux Tan had been sold.

Whether or not Ms. Lauder had a private lavatory tucked next to her wallpapered office overlooking Central Park, Ms. Blodgett has no such luxury. At the Bare Escentuals headquarters, she walks along a narrow hallway to use a three-stall bathroom she shares with the other women on the 23rd floor. "This is where I get my socializing done," she said with a laugh, "while I wait in line."

Ms. Lauder hung photographs of royals on the walls of her reliquary: Prince Charles, the Duchess of Windsor and Princess Grace of Monaco. They kept memories of a modest childhood in Queens at bay. Ms. Blodgett's walls are covered with hundreds of letters and photos of appreciative fans, adoring customers, friends and followers — probably to keep memories of a badgering mom at bay.

"Until I was 39, I was driven to please her," Ms. Blodgett said. "And I guess I'm still trying to win her approval, in a way." There is more to worry about these days.

"I have an image in my head of the people who use Bare Escentuals," she said, when asked how it feels to have started something so huge.

"I literally know them. I know their personalities. What they look like. What they sound like. Where they live. I know them, and inside my head, they are talking to me all day long and I've got a lot of work to do to make them happy. That's how it feels."



# **COMMANDER IN HEELS OWN NETWORK**

**SEPTEMBER 2012**

## *Commander in Heels* - About the Special



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# COMMANDER IN HEELS

*Commander in Heels* takes viewers inside the lives of two top female executives who are leaders in the cosmetic and confectionary industries for a 360 degree view of how these high-powered women balance their personal and professional lives. The special features Dylan Lauren, the daughter of fashion icon Ralph Lauren, who made a name for herself as the CEO of the candy company and megastore, Dylan's Candy Bar and Leslie Blodgett, the Executive Chairman of one of the world's top cosmetic companies, Bare Escentuals.

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Bare Escentuals

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Leslie Blodgett, former CEO of Bare Escentuals.

COURTESY: BARE ESSENTUALS

**Big win:** Sold over 254,000 makeup kits in one day on QVC

Website: [www.bareescentuals.com](http://www.bareescentuals.com)

Swirl, tap and buff.

When Leslie Blodgett first debuted that technique for applying loose mineral makeup foundation before a live audience on QVC in 1997, she remembers "freaking out."

But Blodgett sold \$45,000 worth of mineral foundation in six minutes that day.

"I was jumping up and down. It was a huge hit for me," she said. Four years later, bareMinerals makeup became a No. 1 selling brand on QVC.

Blodgett developed bareMinerals, a line of 100% natural loose mineral makeup, at Bare Escentuals. She joined Bare Escentuals in 1994 when it was a small San Francisco-based retailer with seven regional stores selling bath and body products. Blodgett transformed the company into a maker of mineral makeup. She is widely credited with pioneering the mineral makeup trend in the United States.

Under Blodgett, Bare Escentuals went public and in 2010 was acquired by Japanese cosmetics company Shiseido for over \$1.8 billion.

Today Blodgett is executive chairman at Bare Escentuals. "I'm still definitely the face of the company," she said. And she's still teaching the swirl, tap, buff technique on QVC.



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run Common Sense Media. Shifting to the non-profit world was a decidedly different career move for a woman used to advising high-stakes deals and powerful figures—never mind the pay cut. “Clearly I’m not in it for the money,” she says, laughing. “It’s a fabulous challenge to grow this organization’s impact and get a lot more people knowing about it. I mean, I’m working harder now than I did at McKinsey.”

Shenkan manages the group’s family-minded reviews of video games, apps, and movies; an

education group that oversees curricula in more than 30,000 grade schools; and advocacy and research. The job was a natural evolution of her interest in the Internet, only this time, she says, it’s become a mission. “I’m a huge believer in the power of technology, but kids’ lives intersect with it very differently than adults’,” she says, noting her own 7-year-old daughter, Madeline. “Instead of building a business and turning a profit, I’m focused on raising a generation of healthy kids,” she says. —*Roberta Bernstein*

## CAREER ADVICE FROM LESLIE BLODGETT

### 1 SCARED? YOU’RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK.

You’ll work hardest when you’ve got a lot on the line. “If you’re taking the easy way out, you might as well be asleep,” she told grads at the Fashion Institute of Technology recently. “If you’re really putting yourself on the line, you’re going to be scared—and that’s when you push through things.”

### 2 IGNORE THE NAYSAYERS—THERE WILL BE MANY.

Struggling to revive Bare Escentuals, Blodgett decided to pitch the line on QVC. She got loads of flack for the idea. “There are so many people out there who want to tell you not to do something. If you think they’re right, it’s going to steer you wrong,” she advises. In fact, her QVC debut proved a triumph and helped lead the company to profitability.

### 3 BRACE YOURSELF FOR TOUGH SACRIFICES.

Overseeing a multimillion-dollar cosmetics powerhouse gave Blodgett and her family financial freedom. The trade-off: missing out on family time. “Balance is incredibly hard,” she says.

## Leslie Blodgett Executive chairman, Bare Escentuals

THOUGH LESLIE BLODGETT has delivered countless speeches over the past 15 years, she was too nervous to eat before addressing Manhattan’s Fashion Institute of Technology graduating class last year. As she approached the lectern, she took a deep breath, mustered all her mojo, and spoke slowly and emphatically. “I don’t know anyone who has stopped being afraid,” she told them. “If you’re taking the easy way out, the boring way out, boy, you might as well be asleep. If you’re really putting yourself on the line, you’re going to be scared, and that’s OK, because that’s when you push through things—and that’s when you feel most triumphant.”

Blodgett, 50, is proof that swallowing those fears and plowing ahead can pay off in spades. In 1994, she was a fledgling cosmetics exec desperately trying to save Bare Escentuals, a money-losing, mineral-based makeup company. If she could just reach her customers, she thought, she knew she could sell them on the benefits of her powder-based product line, an antidote to pancake makeup and made from all-natural ingredients. At the time, QVC was a retail backwater catering to the out-of-work and sleep-deprived, but Blodgett had a hunch. So she donned a crisp white Bebe suit and a fake 5-carat diamond ring, and—cameras rolling—pitched her heart out.

QVC viewers lapped up her frank approach. In just six minutes, she sold 1,300 brush and foundation kits. Soon, she was moving \$1.4 million worth of merchandise an hour. Within five years, the company she once could barely keep afloat was generating \$65 million in revenue, thanks in large measure to Blodgett’s girlfriend relatability and winning spiel. “Everyone told me I was crazy for doing home shopping,” she recalls. “There are so many people out there who want to tell you not to do something. If you think they’re right, it’s going to steer you wrong.”

Raised by a single mother on Long Island,

New York—“She wanted me to not have to be dependent on a man to get what I wanted”—Blodgett got her start in cosmetics at the Ultima II counter at Macy’s. She saw firsthand the transformative effect of makeup. “It’s not just about the perfect shade of red lipstick,” Blodgett says. “It’s about that woman feeling good enough to ask for a raise, or to go on a job interview, or ask that guy out on a date.” From there, she landed an internship at Revlon, then eventually an entry-level product development gig at Max Factor, followed by a stint at Neutrogena. Along the way, she married Keith Blodgett, a commercial producer, and had a son, Trent, now 19.

When she was approached by a Bare Escentuals investor asking if she’d help revive the company, which was teetering on the verge of bankruptcy, Blodgett jumped at the chance, relocating her family from Los Angeles to the Bay Area. Those early days were rife with difficult compromises: Blodgett’s husband quit his job to raise Trent while she put in long hours building up the business. She missed so many of Trent’s high school lacrosse games that she hired a videographer to document them. (“I’ve never reviewed them,” she confesses sheepishly.) “Balance is incredibly hard,” Blodgett admits wistfully. “I’m still feeling guilty about it.”

Then, the moment every entrepreneur dreams of: the buyout offer. Two years ago, Shiseido snapped up Bare Escentuals for \$1.7 billion. (Blodgett won’t comment on how much she made off the sale.) She recently scaled back her day-to-day involvement and is now exploring a life beyond the brand. “I will have another big act,” she says, her eyes widening. “I know that there are seeds inside of me that want to grow. I could become a painter. You don’t know until you try. Not that I’m going to be famous, but I’m going to do something that is revolutionary—for me.” —*Diana Kapp*

“It’s not just about the perfect shade of lipstick. It’s about feeling good enough to ask for a raise or that guy out on a date.”



Leslie Blodgett's first real job: working at a cosmetics counter at Macy's.



# **BLOOMBERG BUSINESSWEEK**

**JANUARY 2012**

# Bloomberg Businessweek

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INEVITABILITY  
p8

A man in a dark sweater and pants stands with his arms crossed, looking up at a giant baby bottle that towers over him. The bottle has a yellow nipple and a pink cap. The title 'THE PERFECT HUSBAND' is printed on the bottle's body.

## THE PERFECT HUSBAND

He cooks, cleans—and lets his wife climb the corporate ladder. Inside the sacrifices, resentments, and sometime-bliss of the modern marriage p54







**Behind**



**Every**



**Great**



**Woman**

The rise of the CEO mom  
has created a new kind of  
trophy husband  
By Carol Hymowitz  
Photograph by  
Jake Stangel

Bare Escentuals Chairman  
Leslie Blodgett with  
son Trent and husband Keith  
in their Tiburon (Calif.) home







Among the 80 or so customers crammed into Bare Escentuals, it's easy to spot Leslie Blodgett. It's not merely her six-inch platform heels and bright magenta-and-blue dress that set her apart in the Thousand Oaks (Calif.) mall boutique, but her confidence. To the woman concerned she's too old for shimmery eye shadow, Blodgett swoops in and encourages her to wear whatever she wants. With a deft sweep of a brush, she demonstrates a new shade of blush on another customer's cheek. And when she isn't helping anyone, she pivots on her heels for admirers gushing about her dress, made by the breakout designer Erdem.

Blodgett, 49, has spent the past 18 years nurturing Bare Escentuals from a startup into a global cosmetics empire. She sold the company for \$1.7 billion to Shiseido in March 2010 but still pitches products in stores around the world and chats incessantly with customers online. Scores of fans post daily messages on Blodgett's Facebook page, confessing details about their personal lives and offering opinions on her additive-free makeup. She only wishes her 19-year-old son, Trent, were in touch with her as frequently as he is with her husband, Keith. In 1995, at 38, Keith quit making television commercials to raise Trent, freeing up Leslie to build her business. She'd do it all again, but she's jealous of her husband's relationship with her son. Trent, a college sophomore, texts his father almost every day; he often goes a week without texting her.

"Once I knew my role was providing for the family, I took that very seriously. But there was envy knowing I wasn't there for our son during the day," says Blodgett. "Keith does everything at home—the cooking, repairs, finances, vacation planning—and I could work long hours and travel a lot, knowing he took such good care of Trent. I love my work, but I would have liked to have a little more balance or even understand what that means."

Blodgett's lament is becoming more familiar as a generation of female breadwinners look back on the sacrifices—some little, some profound—required to have the careers they wanted. Like hundreds of thousands of women who have advanced into management roles in the past two decades—and, in particular, the hundreds who've become senior corporate officers—she figured out early what every man with a corner office has long known: To make it to the top, you need a wife. If that wife happens to be a husband, and increasingly it is, so be it.

When Carly Fiorina became Hewlett-Packard's first female chief executive officer, the existence of her househusband, Frank Fiorina, who had retired early from AT&T to support her career, was a mini-sensation; nine years later, this arrangement isn't at all unusual. Seven of the 18 women who are currently CEOs of Fortune 500 companies—including Xerox's Ursula Burns, PepsiCo's Indra Nooyi, and WellPoint's Angela Braly—have, or at some point have had, a stay-at-home husband. So do scores of female CEOs of smaller companies and women in other senior executive jobs. Others, like IBM's new CEO, Ginni Rometty, have spouses who dialed back their careers to become their powerful wives' chief domestic officers.

This role reversal is occurring more and more as women edge past men at work. Women now fill a majority of jobs in the U.S., including 51.4 percent of managerial and professional positions, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. Some 23 percent of wives now out-earn their husbands, according to a 2010 study by the Pew Research Center. And this earnings trend is more dramatic among younger people. Women 30 and under make more money, on average, than their male counterparts in all but three of the largest cities in the U.S.

During the recent recession, three men lost their jobs for every woman. Many unemployed fathers, casualties of layoffs in manufacturing and finance, have ended up caring for their children full-time while their wives are the primary wage earners. The number of men in the U.S. who regularly care for children under age five increased to 32 percent in 2010 from 19 percent in 1988, according to Census figures. Among those fathers with preschool-age children, one in five served as the main caregiver.

Even as the trend becomes more widespread, stigmas persist. At-home dads are sometimes perceived as freeloaders, even if they've lost jobs. Or they're considered frivolous kept men—gentlemen who golf. The househusbands of highly successful women, after all, live in luxurious homes, take nice vacations, and can afford nannies and housekeepers, which many employ at least part-time. In reaction, at-home dads have launched a spate of support groups and daddy blogs to defend themselves.

"Men are suddenly seeing what it's been like for women throughout history," says Linda R. Hirshman, a lawyer and the author of *Get to Work*, a book that challenges at-home moms to secure paying jobs and insist that their husbands do at least half the housework. Caring for children all day and doing housework is tiring, unappreciated work that few are cut out for—and it leaves men and women alike feeling isolated and diminished.

There's some good news about the at-home dads trend. "By going against the grain, men get to stretch their parenting abilities and women can advance," notes Stephanie Coontz, a family studies professor at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Wash., and author of *Marriage: a History*. And yet the trend underscores something else: When jobs are scarce or one part-



**"Men are suddenly seeing what it's been like for women throughout history"**



Former drugstore.com CEO Dawn Lepore speaks with her two kids and husband, Ken Gladden, in the driveway of their Seattle home



ner is aiming high, a two-career partnership is next to impossible. "Top power jobs are so time-consuming and difficult, you can't have two spouses doing them and maintain a marriage and family," says Coontz. This explains why, even as women make up more of the workforce, they're still a small minority (14 percent, according to New York-based Catalyst) in senior executive jobs. When they reach the always-on, all-consuming executive level, "it's still women who more often put family ahead of their careers," says Ken Matos, a senior director at Families and Work Institute in New York. It may explain, too, why bookstore shelves and e-book catalogs are jammed with self-help books for ambitious women, of which *I'd Rather Be in Charge*, by former Ogilvy-Mather Worldwide CEO Charlotte Beers, is merely the latest. Some, such as Hirshman's top-selling *Get to Work*, recommend that women "marry down"—find husbands who won't mind staying at home—or wed older men who are ready to retire as their careers take off. What's indisputable is that couples increasingly are negotiating whose career will take precedence before they start a family.

"Your wife's career is about to soar, and you need to get out of her way." That's what Ken Gladden says his boss told him shortly before his wife, Dawn Lepore, was named the first female CIO at Charles Schwab in 1994. He was a vice-president at Schwab in computer systems. Lepore's promotion meant she'd become his top boss. "I married above my station," Gladden jokes.

Gladden moved to a job at Visa. When their son, Andrew, was born four years later in 1998, Gladden quit working altogether. He and Lepore had tried for years to have a child and didn't want him raised by a nanny. Being a full-time dad wasn't the biggest adjustment Gladden made for Lepore's career. That came later, when Seattle-based drugstore.com recruited Lepore to become its CEO in 2004.

Gladden had lived in the San Francisco Bay Area for 25 years and wasn't keen to move to a city where it rains a lot and he didn't know anyone. He rejected Lepore's suggestion that she commute between Seattle and San Francisco, and after some long discussions he agreed to relocate—on the condition that they kept their Bay Area home. They still return for holidays and some vacations. "To do what I'm doing, you've got to be able to say 'my wife's the breadwinner, the more powerful one,' and be O.K. with that. But you also need your own interests," says Gladden, who has used his computing skills to launch a home-based business developing software for schools.

The couple's five-bedroom Seattle home overlooks Lake Washington. Gladden, 63, is chief administrator of it and their children, who now are 9 and 13. While they're in school, he works on his software. From 3 p.m. until bedtime, he car-pools to and from sports and music lessons, warms up dinners prepared by a part-time housekeeper, and supervises homework. Lepore, 57, is often out of town. She oversaw the sale of drugstore.com to Walgreens last year, for



\$429 million. As CEO, she was rarely home before 8 or 9 p.m. and traveled several days a week. Now, as a consultant to several startups and a director at eBay, she still travels frequently. If Gladden envies anything, it's the ease with which his wife can walk into a room filled with well-known executives like Bill Gates and "go right up to them and start talking. I don't feel like I can participate," he says.

Lepore wishes her "biggest supporter" would get more recognition for everything he does at home. When an executive recently told her "having an at-home husband makes it easy for you to be a CEO," she responded, "no, not easy. He makes it possible." Lepore advises younger women to "choose your spouse carefully. If you want a top job, you need a husband who isn't self-involved and will support your success," even if you go further than him. There are tradeoffs, she warns: "I've missed so much with my kids—school plays, recitals, just seeing them every day."

For Lepore and Gladden, the role reversal paid off, and, as one of the few couples willing to go public about their domestic arrangement, they're a rare source of inspiration for those who are still figuring it out. Like Gladden, Matt Schneider, 36, is an at-home dad. A former technology company manager and then a sixth grade teacher, he cares for his sons Max and Sam, 6 and 3, while his wife, Priyanka, also 36, puts in 10-hour days as chief operating officer at a Manhattan real estate management startup. He feels "privileged," he says, to be with his sons full-time "and see them change every day," while allowing that child care and housework can be mind-numbing. He uses every minute of the 2½ hours each weekday when Sam is in preschool to expand the NYC DADS Group he co-founded, 450 members strong. Members meet for play dates with their kids, discuss parenting, and stand up for at-home dads. "We're still portrayed as bumbling idiots," Schneider says. He rails against a prejudice that moms would do a better job—if only they were there. "Everyone is learning from scratch how to change diapers and toilet-train," he says, "and there's no reason to think this is woman's work."

Schneider and his wife, who met as undergraduates at University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, decided before they wed that she'd have the big career and he'd be the primary parent. "It's her name on the paycheck, and sure, we've thought about the precariousness of having just one breadwinner. But she wouldn't earn what she does if I wasn't doing what I do," he says. Which is not to say that he doesn't wonder

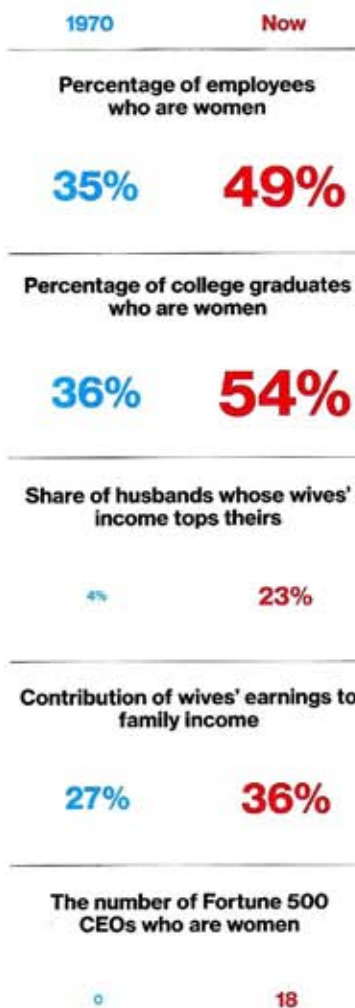
"whether I can get back to a career when I want to and build on what I've done before."

At-home moms have snubbed him at arts and crafts classes and on playgrounds. "Men, even those of us pushing strollers, are perceived as dangerous," Schneider says. He was rejected when he wanted to join an at-home neighborhood moms' group, which prompted him to blog more about the similarities among moms and dads. "I've met moms and dads who are happy to give a screaming kid a candy bar to get him to settle down, and moms and dads who show up at play dates with containers filled with organic fruit," he says. "The differences aren't gender-specific."

It's no different for gay couples. Brad Kleiner and Flint Gehre have taken turns being at-home dads for their three sons, now 19, 18, and 10. When their sons—biological siblings they adopted through the Los Angeles County foster care system—were young, Kleiner and Gehre relied first on a weekday nanny and then a live-in one while both worked full-time. Kleiner, 50, was an executive in human resources at Walt Disney and NASA. Gehre, 46, was a teacher and then director of global learning and communications at Disney. Five years ago, they decided they no longer wanted to outsource parenting. "We always wanted to have dinner together as a family, but by the time we got home, the nanny had fed our kids," says Gehre. "Our kids were at pivotal ages—the two oldest about to go to high school and the youngest to first grade. We wanted to be the ones instilling our values and be there when they needed help with homework or had to get to a doctor."

In 2007 the couple moved from Los Angeles to Avon, Conn., where they were able to get married legally and find better schools for their kids. Kleiner became the full-time dad and Gehre kept his Disney job, working partly from home and traveling frequently to Los Angeles. A year later they switched: Gehre quit Disney to parent full-time and Kleiner found a new job as a human resources director at Cigna Healthcare. Gehre says he's never felt discriminated against as a gay dad or a stay-at-home dad. "No one has ever said to me, 'Why would you stay home with the kids?' Where we're discriminated is when we pay taxes. We don't qualify for the marriage deduction, we have to file as single people," he says. If he has one regret about being at home, it's the lack of adult conversation and stimulation: "I worked in a very high-intensity atmosphere with very intelligent and hard-driving people, and that keeps

## A Changing Landscape



Even before they had their sons, Matt and Priyanka Schneider, shown in their New York kitchen, agreed he'd stay home to raise them



you sharp." Any dullness doesn't make Gehre doubt his decision. Having consciously chosen to have a family, he and Kleiner felt they had not only to provide the essentials, but also to be present.

**Is there an alternate universe where both parents can pursue careers without outsourcing child care?** The five Nordic countries—Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark—are noted leaders in keeping moms, in particular, on the job. "These countries have made it possible to have a better division of labor both at work and at home through policies that both encourage the participation of women in the labor force and men in their families," says Saadia Zahidi, co-author of the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report*. The policies Zahidi refers to include mandatory paternal leave in combination with maternity leave; generous, federally mandated parental leave benefits; gender-neutral tax incentives; and post-maternity reentry programs.

There were no such programs or precedents for Jennifer Granholm and Dan Mulhern. When the two met at Harvard Law School, she grilled him about what he expected from a wife. Mulhern accepted that Granholm would never be a homemaker like his mother, but he never expected her to run for political office. "When I was young," he says, "I thought I'd be the governor"—not married to the governor. Granholm was governor of Michigan from 2003 through 2010, and her election forced Mulhern to walk away from the Detroit-based consulting business he founded, which had numerous contracts with state-licensed health insurance companies, municipalities, and school districts. Once that happened, he felt "in a backroom somewhere" and in a marriage that was "a lot more give than take."

Mulhern understood that his wife faced "extraordinary pressure" during her two terms, including a \$1.7 billion budget deficit and the bankruptcies of General Motors and Chrysler. She had limited time for their three children, who were 6, 11, and 14 when she was elected, and even less for him. "I didn't want to say, 'hey, you missed my birthday' or 'you haven't even noticed what happened with the kids,' but I sometimes felt resentful," he says.

Mulhern says he complained to his wife that they spent 95 percent of the little time they had together talking about her work. He missed the attention she used to give him but felt humiliated asking for it. He gradually changed his expectations. He stopped waiting for Granholm to call him in the middle of the day to share what had happened at meetings they'd spent time talking about the prior evening. And he realized he couldn't recreate for her all the memorable or awkward moments he had with their children—like the time he found his daughter and her high school friends in the outdoor shower, "ostensibly with their clothes on. I had to call all the parents and tell them, as a courtesy, 'I want you to know this happened at the Governor's mansion,'" he says. "While my wife was battling the Republican head of the State Senate, I had a teenage daughter who was a more formidable opponent."

When Granholm left office and was asked "what's next?" she said, "it's Dan's turn." As a former governor, though, she's the one with more obvious opportunities. Later this month, Granholm launches a daily political commentary show on Current TV. She's also teaching at the University of California at Berkeley, where Dan has a part-time gig thanks to his wife.

"The employment opportunities that come my way—and my salary potential—aren't what my wife's are now," says Mulhern. He plans to continue to teach, write, and do some consulting, while also taking care of their 14-year-old son. "Someone has to be focused on him every day," he says.

The experiences and reflections of powerful women and their at-home husbands could lead to changes at work so that neither women nor men have to sacrifice their careers or families. "There's no reason women should feel guilty about achieving great success, but there should be a way for success to include professional and personal happiness for everyone," says *Get to Work* author Hirshman. "If you have to kill yourself at work, that's bad for everyone."

Kathleen Christensen agrees. As program director at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, she has focused on work and family issues and says we're back to the 1950s, only "instead of Jane at home, it's John. But it's still one person doing 100 percent of work outside the home and the other doing 100 percent at home." Just as we saw the Feminine Mystique in the 1960s among frustrated housewives, Christensen predicts, "we may see the Masculine Mystique in 2020."

The children of couples who have reversed roles know the stakes better than anyone. One morning last year, when Dawn Lepore was packing for a business trip to New York, her nine-year-old daughter burst into tears. "I don't want you to travel so much," Elizabeth told her mother. Lepore hugged her, called her school, and said her daughter would be staying home that morning. Then she rescheduled her flight until much later that day. "There have been times when what Elizabeth wants most is a mom who stays home and bakes cookies," she says.

Lepore is sometimes concerned that her children won't be ambitious because they've often heard her complain about how exhausted she is after work. But they're much closer to their father than kids whose dads work full-time, and they have a different perspective about men's and women's potential. When a friend of her daughter's said that fathers go to offices every day, Lepore recalls, "Elizabeth replied, 'Don't be silly, dads are at home.'" **E**



# **WOMEN'S WEAR DAILY BEAUTY INC.**

**DECEMBER 2011**



WWD

AN ISSUE OF WOMEN'S WEAR DAILY

THE BUSINESS OF BEAUTY

# BEAUTY INC



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# corner office

"I used to love the word authentic and I don't anymore because it's become so watered down. Everyone's using it, and people and things that aren't authentic claim to be."



## MASTER CLASS

# The Future Vision of Leslie Blodgett

By combining a penchant for risk-taking on the business side with a shrewd understanding of how real women approach beauty, Leslie Blodgett built Bare Escentuals into an industry powerhouse. **BY RACHEL BROWN**

**PHOTOGRAPHED BY BONNIE SCHIFFMAN**

Since joining Bare Escentuals as chief executive officer in 1994, Leslie Blodgett has become synonymous with the company, transforming it from a bath and body retailer with six stores into a mineral makeup authority. Not afraid to take risks, she forged a new distribution path—one that included QVC, informercials and retail—and the rewards were handsome, indeed. Blodgett took the company public in 2006, coming off a fiscal year when Bare Escentuals generated nearly \$260 million in revenues. Four years later, with its sales topping \$557 million, Bare Escentuals was bought by Shiseido for \$1.7 billion with the goal of building a global megabrand that crosses regional and cultural barriers. After introducing skin care in the U.S. in February, Bare Escentuals is readying its launch in Asia. Blodgett remains deeply involved in marketing, product development and customer relations, but she has left the numbers up to Myles McCormick, who was named chief executive officer in January, when Blodgett became executive chairman.

### *What's your assessment of the current state of the beauty industry?*

It feels good. In 2008, when the financial crisis hit, everyone got a little scared and there was very short-term decision making, lots of discounting. As in all situations like that, when they look really dire, a lot of good ideas surface. People took a deep pause, and now we're seeing some cool innovation in retailing and product. The industry's doing really well right now, consumers are out there, and beauty is a good place to be.

### *Why is beauty doing well while so many other sectors are still suffering from the strain of the recession?*

There's a lot of good product and great choices. There's a lot of interaction on the Web. Women are intrigued with what's happening. As an industry, we're doing a good job of getting women interested, and it's an easier purchase than some of the really high-ticket items.

### *What do you think the beauty industry needs to pay attention to in the year ahead?*

I have a Facebook page, and I asked the people on my page a couple of these questions. One was, "What do you think the beauty industry needs to pay attention to?" (CONTINUED ON PAGE 20)

## IN BRIEF

Leslie Blodgett grew up on Long Island and was raised by her mother, Sylvia Abualy, after her parents divorced when she was 9. A tough woman whom Blodgett credits for her success, Abualy was a home ec teacher. Although Abualy disapproved of Blodgett's love for makeup, she informed her daughter that the Fashion Institute of Technology had started a cosmetics marketing program, and Blodgett enrolled. While there, Blodgett took several part-time jobs, including at the Ultima II counter at Macy's, before heading to the corporate side at Max Factor and then Neutrogena. John Hansen, a partner in the investment firm that owned Bare Escentuals, tapped Blodgett to run the struggling Northern California retailer that had developed a mineral-based makeup line, which Blodgett later reintroduced as bareMinerals.



## MASTER CLASS: LESLIE BLODGETT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

to in the year ahead?" The other one was, "How have you changed as a beauty consumer in the last 12 months?" The year ahead isn't that different from what we've seen. Financially, they are tighter with their expenses. They're looking for products that are dependable. The older women are staying more brand loyal and not trying many new things. The younger women are looking for more antiaging products, but with value. It's not so much the price of the product, but what kind of value am I getting from the brands I trust?

**What else is important to pay attention to?**

Women expect a more realistic look at what beauty really is from the marketing side. There's a lot of that "Come on!," rolling your eyes kind of thing. "Stop hiring these gorgeous models and then doing something to them to make them look even better than they are." When we went into our "Force of Beauty" campaign, we could have easily fallen into that trap, but we agree with the people who say, "Give us something more realistic."

**How was "Force of Beauty" different? Did you use fake eyelashes or retouching?**

This was a huge issue for us. We did a photo shoot, and we had blind casting. We signed on the models without even knowing what they looked like. When we got the pictures back, they were retouched, and they weren't the people who we hired. We hired them because of who they were, and all of a sudden they didn't look like who they were. We made a decision right there to do extremely minimal retouching. It's a fine line, though, because what if women say they don't want [retouching], but maybe they really do want it. No matter what they want, we have to do it this way, because if it doesn't feel like us, we could never live with ourselves. So, you'll see in the ads, for example, [the lashes] sticking together a little bit because normally they do.

**You're famous for your renegade approach to marketing. What are women looking for in the ways that brands communicate to them?**

I used to love the word authentic, and I don't like it any more because it's become so watered down. Everyone's using it, and people and things that aren't authentic claim to be. Now the customer is going to have to decide what is real and what's not real. They're going to decide between authentic marketing and just authentic. I'd love to come up with a word that describes what the real authentic is.

**You were a pioneer on QVC. How have you seen the channel change?**

They have really upped their programming, and they've made it entertaining, more like regular TV programming. For us, it's been a great launching pad for new products before we even go into retail stores. We did that with the skin care. It's just great to see instantly what people are getting.

**Were you nervous the first time you were on QVC?**

Oh my God! I remember it totally. The night before, I was in my hotel room at the Sheraton, and it was my birthday. I was alone, and I didn't sleep a wink. I didn't want to tell anybody I was doing this in case it failed. I only had 10 minutes anyway, so if it bombed, no one would even know. The first time was very scary, but we sold out.

**What are some key emerging channels of distribution?**

Those retail outlets that are combining editorial content with online retailing, where they give you a lot more information about how to use things and why. There's also a company that I've been talking to that is truly social networking, like the psychology of how your friends in the social scene online works and then you take that to a shopping level. With your best buddies, you see what they're interested in. They don't necessarily have to buy, but it's about what the most popular kids are buying. Those kinds of concepts are very interesting.

**Why do you think that you were successful in infomercials where so many**

**companies have failed?**

We knew going in that one in 20 succeed, and we weren't this powerful, highly profitable company at the time, so it made it even more scary and risky, but we had an extremely unique, innovative product and passionate people telling the story. We had 28 minutes. That's a long time to be able to talk to people about what's unique about this product. Luckily, we didn't listen 100 percent to the people we were working with, who were the real infomercial people. That's what made the show more believable and less gimmicky. We still do the infomercial for many reasons. It can't hurt to keep telling the story to people who have never tried the product before. Back in the early days, people would tell us they would watch it for six months before buying, and that's still the case.

**In the last year, you've also gone deeper into traditional department store distribution. What are the key lessons?**

People who shop there are loyal to those stores. They have very strong beauty businesses, and if we want to reach that customer, we have to be there. They are unique customers. I was just shopping at Macy's, and our store is two doors down. Customers come in, shop at Macy's and leave. They don't even know we have a boutique in that mall. Department stores have great loyalty programs, and they know how to keep their customer in the destination. By the end of the year, we're going to have 14 Dillard's stores, 102 Macy's and 54 Nordstroms.

**How has your role changed in the move from ceo to executive chairman?**

I'm not running the company. So, I'm coming in in a different place, but it's been very fun for me. I'm more entrenched in it now. I'm going to South America, Asia more, learning about cultures. For me, it's important that I go into people's homes and not just do short tours.

**You're like a beauty anthropologist.**

Totally! If I could do it all over again, I would be an anthropologist. I love, love, love it. I was in China this year. I've heard that they buy a lot of stuff, but in their homes, there's nothing there. I was looking under the bed, literally. When I went into the bathroom to look at their makeup, it was just a couple of things, but they're really into their skin. It was surprising for me. It's going to be interesting how much actually they're going to buy. The women I met have very simple beauty routines.

**How would you describe your management style?**

I prefer people not being on their best behavior. In fact, when I go into a meeting, I like to see some feistiness going on, so I will maybe cause trouble. If it's too normal, then please don't even go there.

**What are some pieces of advice that you have for somebody who wishes to follow in your footsteps?**

Well, I wouldn't follow my footsteps. It was too much stress. I didn't have boundaries. It became one with my family, and they sometimes resented that a little bit, that I would bring my work home so much. I wanted them to feel like they were a part of this too, but what ended up happening was that they didn't see the line drawn, and I often chose work over home, thinking it was for the good of the family. I don't know if I would advise that. I don't know how to have work and then have home. I've never learned how to do that; maybe some people do, but I don't know if I would have been successful if I had been able to have a clear definition on both sides.

**What do you do for fun?**

I spend a lot of time in Napa Valley wine country. We just got involved with the Napa Valley Film Festival. I also work out. I have this new thing called The Dailey Method that I do. I love it and hate it. The holidays are coming, and every year my mom comes. She used to be a home ec teacher, and she reminds me how to knit and crochet and we make Christmas cookies. That's what I love doing in December.



Some recent launches from bareMinerals.

# **SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS TIMES**

**APRIL 2011**



THE MOST

# INFLUENTIAL WOMEN

IN BAY AREA BUSINESS

## LESLIE BLODGETT BRINGS COLOR TO BARE ESCENTUALS

The dynamo behind one of the country's most successful beauty companies talks about her leadership style. **Page 6**

### INSIDE:



#### Financial advisers

More women, like Jane Williams, are moving into wealth management. **Page 8**



#### The CFO role

Robin Washington of Gilead and other CFOs talk about their jobs. **Pages 10-14**



#### List of Influential Women

Williams-Sonoma's Laura Alber is among 150 women profiled. **Page 16**



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# The accidental saleswoman

Bare Escentuals executive chairman learned to sell her product on the fly

BY BRIDGET RILEY

San Francisco Business Times

**L**eslie Blodgett didn't tell her friends or family when she made her first appearance on the shopping channel QVC. She wasn't sure she would succeed as a salesperson — the quality she is most lauded for now.

"I didn't want to fail in public," Blodgett said. It was 1997, and she was the CEO of San Francisco-based makeup company Bare Escentuals Inc. "I would have hired someone to do it if we had money."

That morning in 1997, Blodgett sold out the company's inventory. She spoke to the customer as an equal, launching Bare Escentuals from a small-time Bay Area company to a beauty empire that was sold to Japanese beauty giant Shiseido for \$1.7 billion in 2010.

Bare products are currently in 4,500 stores worldwide, 170 which are company-owned. Revenue in 2009 — before the merger — was \$557.5 million. Her "swirl, tap, buff" makeup application mantra — repeated in hundreds of subsequent QVC infomercials and in-store appearances — made the once-fringe mineral makeup concept approachable, and inspired imitations from major brands like L'Oréal.

Within a few years of Blodgett's first QVC appearance, Bare was topping \$100 million in sales. Blodgett remained not only the face of the company, but also a very hands-on CEO. Blodgett admits she can push employees she sees potential in a little too hard, but always sends the flowers the next day at work.

Though she has passed the reins of CEO to Myles McCormick, she continues as the driving marketing force of the company, diligently answering the letters, emails and Facebook messages that stream in from customers.

"It's not marketing to her. It's just how she operates as an individual," said McCormick.

Blodgett, who is now executive chairman, remains passionate and emotional, drawing in talent like McCormick the same way she captivated customers.

McCormick, who first came to the company as CFO before becoming CEO, said he wasn't looking to change jobs when he first met with Blodgett for coffee. She arrived late, ordered off the menu and launched into how Bare was changing the face of makeup. McCormick left his job at Gymboree and jumped on board to help the company go public in 2006.

Senior Vice President and Corporate Counsel Deanna Chechile also first got to know the company as it went public.

"I was amazed at how unconventional a CEO she was," Chechile said. During a recent meeting, Blodgett blasted some dance music to get the executive team on their feet. "I realized she was somebody you wanted to be around and you wanted to be part of the success she was creating."

Chechile got her chance when she helped negotiate the Shiseido acquisition. The talks, conducted through translators, were tedious and time-intensive, but Chechile said Blodgett's personality shone through regardless.

"No doubt they (Shiseido) were just as charmed as the rest of us were. She has



*"I don't think I'm selling. I think I'm educating."*

Leslie Blodgett

a quality you can't replicate," Chechile said.

## Makeup junkie

A lifelong "girly girl," Blodgett has played with color and makeup since age 12 and will still gush over a new shade to her followers on Facebook. When she first worked behind a cosmetics counter, "it clicked," she said. "I love the concept of encouraging women to use makeup. We do look better (with makeup) when it's applied right. That can mean a lot for every part of our life."

But if the sale didn't feel right, she

wouldn't push it, even when she was working on commission.

"I wanted (the customer) to go home and feel good about it," Blodgett said. "Some weeks, I didn't do so great. I had a lot of popcorn for dinner." (Employees at Bare Escentuals' 170 retail stores never work on commission.)

After growing up on Long Island, Blodgett attended a state college, but left after two years. She then headed to a new cosmetics marketing program at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York at her mother's suggestion and went on to jobs at top cosmetic

companies, including Neutrogena and Estee Lauder. While working in product development, Blodgett got a boost of confidence from a co-worker who pointed out her flair for color.

"When you have someone who believes in you, you go home and you believe it, too," Blodgett said.

With her new-found confidence, she knew she needed a fresh company where she could express her developing point of view in cosmetics: a brand that presented a friendly, chemical-free product.

She left her comfortable job at Neutrogena in 1994 to move to San Francisco — a city she'd only visited twice before — after being recruited to head the unknown and unprofitable company, which was founded in 1976. To top it off, she was both a new mother and the breadwinner for her young family. Her boss at Neutrogena even tried to talk her out of it. But she knew that she wasn't going to rise the corporate ladder of cosmetics on her current track. She was a big-picture thinker. Bare Escentuals gave her the opportunity to test out that ability.

"It was so small that if I made a bunch of mistakes, no one would have known about it."

## Reluctant marketer

Blodgett says she fought the idea of herself as a salesperson for many years, especially during her cosmetic counter days in her 20s, but once at Bare, she held control over what she was selling. She reformulated and repackaged the Bare Escentuals foundation. And now she could offer her own pitch, teaching women how to buff the fine powder of mineral makeup with a brush over the TV. Whatever she was doing, it worked. She radiated on screen — the relatable best friend.

Blodgett developed a fiercely loyal fanbase. At in-store appearances, devout customers would line up on the street to meet the woman behind the makeup. These fans call in during infomercials and give feedback on new products — they're the Bare army, of sorts, spreading the brand through word of mouth.

Eventually Blodgett grew into the role of marketer.

"I don't think I'm selling," she said. "I think I'm educating."

## Looking to growth in China

The Shiseido deal has allowed Bare to leverage Shiseido's strong work in skin care and Asian markets. Bare has its eye on launching in China in 2013.

Blodgett recently returned from a trip to China where she stayed with Chinese women, hoping to get better insight into their beauty routines and attitudes. Translating the brand to other countries and languages has been a challenge, but Blodgett has worked to boil down the essence of the brand, outside of the U.S. and beyond even her.

"People outside can see that it's not just me. It's becoming how the brand thinks — it's bigger than a person," Blodgett said.



## THE BAY AREA'S MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMEN

**Lorraine P. Auerbach***President and CEO, Seton Medical Center.***Residence:** Redwood City.**Education:** B.S., biology, Queen's College, City University of New York; M.A., Hospital Administration, Post College, Long Island University; FACHE (Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives).**Community involvement:** Health Plan of San Mateo chairperson, San Mateo Section of Hospital Council of Central and Northern California commissioner; San Mateo Healthcare Authority commissioner.**First job:** Medical research associate in world-renowned research lab — Einstein College of Medicine.**Business hero:** Bill Gates — for his ingenuity, perseverance, willingness to take risks, and above all, his generous philanthropy. He strongly believes in giving back to the community.**Proudest achievement:** Created a world-class hospital with a new health care delivery model emphasizing excellence in service and quality from the ground up.**Biggest workplace challenge:** Adapting to the constantly changing health care environment, including health care reform, while continuously improving quality of care and patient satisfaction.**Something that would surprise others:** I became a hospital CEO in my early 30s.**Five-year goal:** To create and build a new medical center of the future that will ensure viability and sustainability for our community.**Katherine August-deWilde***President and chief operating officer, First Republic Bank.***Residence:** San Francisco.**Education:** A.B., Goucher College; M.B.A., Stanford Graduate School of Business.**Board memberships:** First Republic Bank board of directors.**Community involvement:** Stanford University Center on Longevity advisory council member; Clayman Institute for Gender Research at Stanford University member; Boys & Girls Club of San Francisco trustee.**First job:** Working as an associate for McKinsey & Co. out of Stanford Business School.**Business hero:** Margaret Thatcher for her

fearless leadership and willingness to tackle England's difficult economic challenges.

**Proudest achievement:** Completing our recent management buyback and initial public offering, while strengthening First Republic's unique brand, which delivers exceptional client service.**Biggest workplace challenge:** Retaining First Republic's entrepreneurial spirit, which has been a great asset for the company.**Five-year goal:** To build on First Republic's reputation for service excellence, to continue attracting the industry's most accomplished professionals, and to remain deeply involved in communities.**Elizabeth C. Babcock***Chief education and digital strategy officer, Roberts Dean of Education, California Academy of Sciences.***Residence:** San Francisco.**Education:** B.A., psychology, Northwestern University; B.M., music education, Northwestern University; M.A., Ph.D., cultural anthropology; Indiana University.**Community involvement:** Society for Applied Anthropology fellow; Encyclopedia of Life Education and Outreach Committee adviser; 2010 Museum Edition of the New Media Consortium advisory board member.**First job:** I ran a very small nonprofit organization called the Legal Clinic for the Homeless in Atlanta. I traveled to homeless shelters, helping people get their government benefits, finding them pro-bono legal counsel, helping them find housing, and serving as their advocate in a whole host of situations.**Business hero:** Ms. Shelton, principal of South Loop Elementary, and others like her who continue to accomplish extraordinary things for their students, teachers and families in the face of devastating budget cuts.**Proudest achievement:** I have been fortunate enough to teach many subject areas and many ages and grade levels. My proudest achievements are those many instances in which my participation helped my student to grasp a concept that was previously challenging, or to excel in a way that they never imagined.**Biggest workplace challenge:** I feel immense pressure to do as much as I can, as quickly as I can, to help improve science education and increase access to high quality educational experiences for students as well as adults.**Something that would surprise others:** I once traveled the world for 10 months leading a group of 28 undergraduates on an exploration of sustainable development practices in other cultures and societies.**Five-year goal:** To expand access to and the quality of science education around the Bay Area.**Sandy Barbour***Director of athletics, University of California, Berkeley.***Residence:** Oakland.**Education:** B.S., physical education, Wake Forest University; M.S., sport management, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; M.B.A., Kellogg Graduate School of Management, Northwestern University.**Community involvement:** SPAAT (Student Program for Academic and Athletic Transitioning) board of directors; NACDA executive board.**First job:** Director of Athletic Recruiting Services, Northwestern University in 1982. It was an incredible first job in an athletic administration. It gave me exposure to almost every aspect of the enterprise.**Business hero:** Kevin White, Duke University, vice president/director of athletics. He has a clear vision, unchallenged integrity and a great sense of humor!**Proudest Achievement:** Helping young people access quality education and ignite their passion for a competitive environment.**Biggest workplace challenge:** Balancing the educational objectives of intercollegiate athletics with the business/entertainment objectives/imperatives.**Something that would surprise others:** I can't live without my pilates!**Five-year goal:** Cal Athletics to be nationally recognized as the preeminent intercollegiate athletics program in the country.**Lydia Beebe***Corporate secretary and chief governance officer, Chevron Corp.***Residence:** San Francisco.**Education:** B.S., journalism; J.D., University of Kansas; M.B.A., taxation, Golden Gate University.**Community involvement:** San Francisco Symphony; Olympic Club board of governors; National Association of Corporate Directors of Northern California, board of directors.**First job:** A bowling alley snack bar cook.**Business hero:** Meg Whitman.**Proudest achievement:** My wonderful family.**Biggest workplace challenge:** Constantly changing to meet changing requirements.**Something that would surprise others:** I was a weekend TV reporter in college.**Five-year goal:** Plan "encore" career/life.**Sharon Black***Senior district president of Northern and Central California, Hawaii, Utah and Nevada operations, Robert Half International.***Residence:** Menlo Park.**Education:** B.S., political science, San Diego State University.**Community involvement:** Development Committee for the local Girl Scouts of America board member; Boys & Girls Club of America toy drive; Dress for Success.**First Job:** A sales clerk at a local pharmacy.**Business Hero:** Jack Welch, former Chairman and CEO of General Electric.**Proudest Achievement:** The impact that my work has on the job seekers and employers that keep our local business community thriving.**Biggest Workplace Challenge:** Helping position our clients for growth, while retaining top talent, so they are stronger coming out of the recession than they were going in.**Something that would surprise others:** I trained in swimming for the U.S. Junior Olympics.**Five-year goal:** To position Robert Half as an industry leader by demonstrating our continued commitment to providing superior service and value-added resources to our client and candidate base.**Leslie Blodgett***Founder and executive chairman, Bare Escentuals.***Residence:** Tiburon.**Education:** A.A., Fashion Institute of Technology.**Community involvement:** Cosmetic Executive Women.**First job:** Selling hair sticks at Bloomingdale's 59th Street in New York.**Business hero:** Steve Jobs. He created such loyalty. Everyone looks to that brand. He didn't just create a category, they are the category.**Proudest achievement:** On our first customer cruise we passed the microphone and women spoke from the heart. Over tears and hugs, I realized this brand brings women together.**Biggest workplace challenge:** The responsibility in figuring out how to address everyone's personal concerns as the business continues to grow.**Something that would surprise others:** Public speaking makes me anxious. Doesn't matter the size of the audience, big or small.**Five-year goal:** Creating a day to celebrate women worldwide.



# **SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE**

**SEPTEMBER 2011**



SF  
iS



# SHADES OF BEAUTY

*Bare Escentuals CEO Leslie Blodgett wants her new cosmetic collection to be about more than making pretty faces. Page 7*

## INSIDE



**The iS List:** Street-smart lipsticks reference San Francisco. Page 3



**Objects of Affection:** Fashion's first Fulbright scholar. Page 4

**Fashion:** The biggest spring trend? Sorbet hues. Page 8



**Preview:** Milliner whips up Glamorama-ready fascinators. Page 9



## Cover Story



### THE GRAND FINALE

A duo of the new Bare Minerals Ready line of eye shadows are called Standing O (left) and Climax.



### THE DREAM SEQUENCE

A quad of Ready eye shadows consists of (clockwise from left): 500 Thread Count, Romp, Nightcap and Boudoir.



### SHOWSTOPPER

This duo compact is part of the new Bare Minerals eye shadow line premiering this fall.

# HIDDEN BEAUTY

*Bare Escentuals goes beyond the superficial by picking models for its new eye shadow ad campaign sight unseen, based on voice-only interviews*

By Sarah Adler

CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Some might blush at the idea that makeup can make much of a difference, but not Leslie Blodgett, the force behind the Bare Escentuals mineral cosmetics empire. She believes beauty can change the world, and she's spearheading the San Francisco company's effort to prove her point.

"Pretty is great, but it's more of a fleeting thing, while beauty is putting things into action," she said.

So when it came time to promote a new line of pressed eye shadows, Blodgett and her team decided to take unconventional action. Instead of showing dewy models in glossy advertisements, they decided to hire spokesmodels based only on what they said in interviews during a blind casting session behind a soundstage wall, their voices piped in on speakers with no visual cues.

"Bringing on models and actresses that we never saw until after they signed their contracts is unheard of in our industry," Blodgett said. Working with an advertising agency, the company posed questions to 271 models and actresses to learn their passions, interests and values. After three days of interviewing 78 finalists, five were hired.

The "Be a Force of Beauty" advertisements are scheduled to appear in print, on TV (network and cable) and online this fall. It has been compared to the 2004 Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, which featured non-model women in a series of advertisements shot by British fashion photographer Rankin.

"I have talked, touched, kissed and hugged many women over the years who may not be considered model-quality," said Blodgett. "But they are even more beautiful than stereotypical 'pretty' standards because they have something to say and are doing mega things and contributing to society."

Blodgett, who lives in Marin with her husband, Keith, and whose son, Trent, is a college sophomore, has used her own story to connect with her legions of fans, many of whom belong to dedicated sites on the Web and travel long distances to meet her when she makes appearances at stores and events. Even her dog, Kiko, was named by fans.

Even though the 35-year-old company — composed of Bare Escentuals, Bare Minerals, Buxom and MD Formulations — was sold to Shiseido in 2010 for \$1.7 billion, Blodgett still writes personal thank-you notes to customers who send her photos and letters for her wall of inspiration.

In fact, she said, it was the constant pleas in those letters and other conversations that



Russell Yip / The Chronicle

Leslie Blodgett, the guiding light of Bare Escentuals, has legions of fans, many of whom have sent her cards, photos and letters that adorn the wall of her San Francisco office.

led to the company's new collection of Bare Minerals eye shadows called Ready, using solid rather than the signature loose minerals.

"We couldn't just put eye shadows in a pressed form just for the ease of transport," she said. "We just weren't ready."

The product development started sourcing innovative ingredients and raw materials that would preserve the colors in solid form without chemical additives and preservatives, which the company shuns.

Blodgett's husband, a stay-at-home dad, was the inspiration for one of the line's main ingredients. An avid Italian

cook, he uses only cold-pressed olive oil for his dishes. Blodgett recalls watching him cook and wax poetic on the benefits of cold-pressed olive oil and took that idea back to the lab, where the team exper-

encourages her team to "go outside to see what the world has to offer."

Blodgett was part of the research, and wears her line — donning a different look each day, though relying on her go-to standards (Bare Minerals Original SPF15 medium beige foundation, Around the Clock midnight eyeliner, Buxom Brooklyn lipstick mixed with Bare Minerals Pretty

Amazing in Confidence) — something she has lived by since joining the company 17 years ago.

"We never want to cover up and mask who you are. You deserve to look like yourself and never feel like there is an obstacle between you and the

**Sampling of the "Real Beauty" questions asked during the campaign's model casting:**

**1** What are three things people don't know about you?

**2** If you were packing for a perfect island vacation with the man of your dreams, what one item would you need to bring with you?

**3** Assuming money wasn't an issue, if you were to give up your job and pursue another passion for a year, what would you do and why?

**4** If you had a time machine, where would be your first stop?

**5** If you could put your personal motto on a T-shirt, what would it say?

**6** What was the last thing you Googled?

To read Blodgett's responses, go to [sfgate.com/style](http://sfgate.com/style)

rest of the world," Blodgett said, referring to her signature foundation product, the mineral-based Bare Minerals line, which doesn't contain binders or fillers and has won multiple awards from beauty editors and organizations.

"Once we got to the point where Bare Minerals was accepted and could help women be comfortable without wearing a mask — that they could face the world in a natural way — with this campaign, we can now take it one step further," she said.

Blodgett's hope is that her industry is ready for a campaign whose platform is to create a dialogue.

"We're becoming part of a movement that is redefining what it means to be beautiful," said Blodgett, who says that other than basic color correction, the ads did not "obsessively retouch" or airbrush the images of the women. Age lines, puffy eyes and uneven wrinkles were deliberately preserved.

She wants to change the images that women and society see.

"If we can put more emphasis on who you are, what you do and what you really look like than on what you're 'supposed' to look like, then maybe you'll be more accepting when you first meet another woman."

Blodgett says she is feeling empowered by the campaign.

"Being part of this campaign makes me want to be a better person and push myself even further," Blodgett said. "We are sensing that women all over are feeling better about looking in the mirror, and that is a beautiful thing."

E-mail Sarah Adler at [sadler@sfgchronicle.com](mailto:sadler@sfgchronicle.com).



# **INC. MAGAZINE**

**JULY 2010**



Justin Kan of Justin.tv ponders:  
**WHAT WOULD  
SHOGUN  
DO?**  
PAGE 128



**Master  
of the  
Cold Call**  
PAGE 94



**HOW I DID IT  
LESSONS FROM A  
BILLION-DOLLAR  
MAKEUP MOGUL**  
PAGE 90



# Inc.

The Magazine for Growing Companies



**SPECIAL REPORT**

## **BRING ON THE ENTREPRENEURS!**

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### Sitting Pretty

Leslie Blodgett, executive chairman of Bare Escentuals, at home



## 90 How I Did It

### 76 Bring on the Entrepreneurs!

Our eminently doable, totally reasonable plan to supercharge the economy—and, perhaps, revitalize the American dream

BY AMY BARRETT AND ADAM BLUESTEIN

Leslie Blodgett knew she loved makeup. What she didn't yet recognize was her knack for connecting with people on TV. Then, an appearance on QVC launched her company, Bare Escentuals, into orbit.

AS TOLD TO LIZ WELCH

### 94 There's No Such Thing as a Wrong Number

And eight other nuggets of wisdom from David Rosen, salesman extraordinaire

BY JOHN GROSSMANN



### 70 Case Study Going Toe to Toe

He was determined to buy it back. She said no way. Could Tom and Mary Beth Pastorius resolve their disagreement about the brewery they built together, then sold?

BY CRISTINA ROUVALIS



**Color Coordinated**  
Leslie Blodgett at home in Tiburon, California. She uses similar shades and materials for the interiors of her boutiques.

# LESLIE BLODGETT BARE ESSENTUALS

## A COSMETICS QUEEN AND HER LOYAL FANS

When Leslie Blodgett became CEO of Bare Escentuals in 1994—the company was then a tiny maker of bath and body products—she saw a huge opportunity selling healthy mineral-based makeup. But she didn't quite realize how many women she could reach until she made a pitch on late-night TV. The company's rapid growth led to a 2006 IPO, followed by the sale of the company this year for \$1.7 billion to Shiseido, the Japanese beauty giant. Today, Bare Escentuals, based in San Francisco, has 130 boutiques in the U.S. and one in the U.K., and employs 2,200.

**AS TOLD TO LIZ WELCH**  
PHOTOGRAPH BY JEN SISK

**I've been working** since I was 10. My parents got divorced when I was 9, and my mother raised me, my brother, and my sister on a teacher's salary. She was tough. I probably would have been very lazy if she weren't always on my ass.

**My first real job** was at McDonald's. There was a girl there who taught me how to apply double shades of eye shadow, which I still do today. I always loved makeup, even though my mother didn't approve. She was into the women's-lib movement. She never remarried, loved her independence, and always told me to have my own career. Whenever I went out with a guy, I'd always pay for myself. I didn't want men to think that they had anything on me.

**I spent my first** two years at Oswego State partying. My mom read about a new program in cosmetics marketing at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City, but I needed experience to even apply. My first interview was at the Christian Dior counter at Gimbel's, on 86th Street, but I wasn't their type. Bloomingdale's wouldn't hire me, either, so I waited outside the buying-office door every day until they gave me a commission job selling hair



sticks. I made 21 percent of all sales and ate a lot of popcorn and ramen noodles.

**By then,** I'd been accepted to FIT. I took on part-time jobs, including one at the Ultima II counter at Macy's. That's where I learned about makeup application—and that the makeup counter is a terrible place. The saleswomen were angry and mean. Then I met Keith. He was the first guy who insisted on paying for dinner. We got married very quickly. I think I was looking for a guy who could take care of me emotionally.

**I got a job** at Max Factor in product development and discovered I had a really good eye for color. I moved quickly from assistant to manager. The company was sold to Revlon, which was then bought by Procter & Gamble. I was surrounded by younger M.B.A.'s who were making more than me and had attitudes. I resented that. As a result, I didn't hire M.B.A.'s for years—I wanted passionate people coming up through the industry. I've since learned that you need balance.

**Keith worked in** film production, and we agreed that whoever was making more money would keep working when we started a family. Our son, Trent, was 3 months old when I took a job with Neutrogena. Keith has been a stay-at-home dad ever since. He does everything around the house. I don't even know how to turn on the dishwasher.

**In 1994, John Hansen,** part of an investor group that owned Bare Escentuals, called me. I'd never heard of the company, which made the first mineral-based makeup line and had six stores in Northern California. Back then, everyone used liquid foundation, which seeped into your pores and gave you zits. A powder foundation that was good for your skin made great sense, but the shades Bare Escentuals had created weren't working. They were gross. I knew complexions and how to match skin tones—and I saw a huge opportunity. John hired me, and I became CEO within a few months.

**"That day, we sold \$45,000 worth of product. My heart was pounding when I walked off the set."**

**I relaunched the** line as bareMinerals, with six eye shadows, six blushes, five foundations, and brushes. There were seven of us in the office just winging it.

**By the fourth** quarter of 1996, I thought we weren't going to make it. I spent many sleepless nights worrying. There was not much on TV at 2 a.m., so I found myself watching a smiling woman on QVC selling jewelry and thinking, I could do that. I bought a white suit and a \$29 fake 5-carat diamond ring and decided to give it my best shot.

**I went on air** August 30, 1997—the day Princess Diana died. I said things like, "Do you want to make your skin break out even more? Then don't try my product. But if you're interested in something pure that you can actually sleep in, then let's talk." That day, we sold \$45,000 worth of product. My heart was pounding when I walked off the set. I started screaming, "You rock!" to the host, Lisa Robertson, who's now my best friend.

**Women liked the** product but had questions. I went online daily to respond but couldn't keep up. And then I noticed other women were answering for me. That inspired me to start hosting events at our boutiques. I invited people to come share ideas and tips. I started naming new products after loyal fans.

**I was scheduled** every six weeks on QVC but realized I needed more time to talk about the application process. Infomercials seemed a great way to do that. Suddenly, we had the ability to get our message out daily if we wanted to.

**The infomercials were** a success, but people couldn't find the product. So I focused on distribution. Sephora was an especially hard sell. I sent a white limo to

Sephora's headquarters, which is right down the street, and brought the buyers to our boutique. It worked. A few years later, Nordstrom called.

**Big bashes get** a lot of notice. So we had a cruise for customers to the Bahamas and then one to Mexico. It was like a giant slumber party: We dressed up and danced and had fun. Then, I took a bus tour of our boutiques and we hosted events. I'd talk about our products as well as my thighs. And my Spanx.

**In the mid-2000s,** we started growing too fast and couldn't keep up with demand, so there were a lot of lost sales. We hired Myles McCormick as our chief financial officer in 2004: He's an M.B.A., and so I've learned to love M.B.A.'s. He's now the CEO, and I've become executive chairman. Myles has always done the hard math and business analysis. I make decisions from the gut.

**I've received** thousands of letters. One woman wrote: "Dearest Leslie, I've always been overweight. I've never felt pretty. I lived without cosmetics for 15 years. In 2008, my younger sister convinced me to try bareMinerals. I did—and then I cried. Finally, at 49 years old, I was pretty." She's one of my angels now, part of my volunteer ambassador program. We send these women samples, and they talk about the product to friends, strangers, and colleagues.

**Why am I here?** Because women want to feel pretty. If I have a bad day, I read these letters before I go to sleep at night. They remind me of what we do. It's powerful. I don't want to be a business. I want to be a community. **O**

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**AMUSE (UK)**

**OCTOBER 2012**



# *a* MUSE

ISSUE 06  
OCTOBER 2012

**TRACEY  
EMIN'S  
FASHION  
MAKE-UP**

**COATS  
AND  
BOOTS**

What to wear  
this autumn

**WHAT LINKS  
KATE MOSS,  
BANKSY AND  
SAATCHI?**

They can't get  
enough of Polly  
Morgan's dark art

## *The* **ART** Issue

**PLUS**

MRS MARK RONSON  
steps into the limelight...  
Meet JOSEPHINE DE LA BAUME







# BARE NECESSITIES

How do you turn a hippie  
bubble bath brand into a beauty  
powerhouse? Ask Leslie Blodgett  
of bareMinerals says  
**Stephanie Hirschmiller**

**S**he's been credited with revolutionising the beauty industry with her bareMinerals brand of mineral-based make-up and regularly performs the splits on stage at company conferences so it's pretty hard to believe that executive company chairman, Leslie Blodgett, 50, has ever felt intimidated by anyone. But it hasn't always been thus.

When she started her career in Eighties New York Blodgett failed to get a job on a Christian Dior beauty counter: "I'd worn my best suit, but I don't think I was sophisticated enough for them, at that time." Even later on, she admits shopping online at Bergdorf Goodman as she was too scared to make it through the door. Now she has her own in-store stylist who lines up her favourite designers when she's in town – Victoria Beckham, Stella McCartney and Alexander McQueen.

Just as it should be for a woman who singlehandedly took Bare Escentuals, then an ailing bath and body company with a slightly hippie ethos, to grossing around \$7m a year in the mid-Nineties, to the powerhouse that went public just over a decade later with a turnover of \$550 million. It was snapped up by Shiseido two years ago for \$1.7 billion. From the start, she recognised the potential in the mineral-based make-up that the company offered as a sideline and ran with it. "I thought, 'this is amazing, let me take this and turn this into a brand'" And so bareMinerals was born.

She attributes much of her drive to her mother who brought up

her children (Blodgett is the middle of three) alone following a messy divorce. "She really pushed me. She wanted to make sure that I knew I could be independent of a man, that I had to make my own money and be successful. I was never good enough and I was always trying to please her. She would say horrible things like 'you're gonna be a waitress for the rest of your life if you don't get your shit together!' But if it weren't for her doing that I don't know what I'd be doing now."

Indeed, in her own household, it's Blodgett who is the breadwinner. Her husband Keith, a freelance programme maker, stopped working when their son Trent was born some 20 years ago. "We made a

deal before I got pregnant," she explains, "that whoever had the good job was the one that was going to be working." She does admit to early tensions, though: "Keith didn't feel emasculated in any way, he loved what he was doing. I was always the one causing trouble. I became extremely envious that he got to see Trent every single day. And I would get mad..."

When she was head-hunted in 1994 to run Bare Escentuals, she was 31 and had been working in cosmetics development at Revlon and Max Factor before moving into marketing for Neutrogena's haircare business. She hadn't even heard of the company – there were only eight retail stores in the US as opposed to its current 200-odd – and her son was just a baby, but she took the risk and upped sticks from LA to San Francisco.

It was a hard slog but the pivotal moment came in 1997 when Blodgett's bareMinerals became the first make-up brand to advertise on QVC and her products sold out in six minutes flat. The idea was

**'My mother really pushed me. She'd say things like "you're gonna be a waitress for the rest of your life"'**





a result of her insomnia watching TV in the middle of the night when she couldn't sleep with worry: "The only shows that were on were horror movies and QVC and I just thought, 'let me see if I can get my make-up on the show'. I didn't have money for advertising."

Blodgett still professes to be something of an introvert when it comes to addressing an audience. "I was petrified for the first seven years on QVC, I felt sick every time. But that's why I do dances onstage as I don't get stage fright then," she says by way of explanation for her motivational antics.

So what is the secret of her success? Word of mouth and personal engagement from the outset. A lady called QVC customer services

with a question which Blodgett answered personally – "I was excited to know one person was actually watching," she laughed. The lady (who lived in the remote American Midwest) introduced her to the user forum – a precursor to our social media and she was hooked – constantly interacting with, and listening to, her customers. Those customers moved the forum off QVC and developed their own called B Addicts. "I'm telling you," she says, "this company has evolved solely because of the connection with these women. It's one thing to have a great product with no one using it, but here was a great product that people were using and were freakin' ecstatic about."

*bareMinerals READY SPF 20 Foundation launches in the UK on 1 October, exclusively at Selfridges and Selfridges.com*



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## The Entrepreneurs of the Decade: 2000 to 2009



6 of 17

### Leslie Blodgett of Bare Escentuals



The award for taking a dead company and breathing new life into it goes to Leslie Blodgett, the CEO of Bare Escentuals. When she took over the mineral-based cosmetics company, it had recently been bought out of foreclosure by a venture capital firm for \$160,000. She re-branded the makeup line and added lipsticks and eyeshadow. Then, with no prior TV experience, Blodgett went on QVC and booked \$40,000 in sales in just six minutes. "When people ask me what are the best moments of my life, that has to be one of them," she told *Inc.* in 2008. Her company, which went public in 2006, is now on track to gross \$500 million a year.



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**WOMEN'S WEAR DAILY**

**JANUARY 2010**





► **MEN'S:** Ruggert sportswear takes spotlight at Pitt Uomo, page 4.



► **MEDIA:** Hollywood awards shows ramp up digital profiles, page 3.

► **FASHION:** Diesel taps new artistic director from publishing world, page 2.



► **BEAUTY:** Maison Martin Margiela launching first fragrance, called Untitled, page 6.



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# WWD FRIDAY

Beauty

## Give 'Em Halle

Oscar-winning actress Halle Berry is set to give a big floral arrangement to her fans: Pure Orchid, her second scent, which is due in February. Set to be launched in about 16,000 mass market and midtier doors in the U.S., the limited edition fragrance could do upward of \$10 million at retail. For more, see page 7.

## A Big Move in Beauty: Shiseido Offers \$1.7B To Buy Bare Escentuals

By Pete Born and Molly Prior

IN A ROLLOUT STEP, JAPANESE COSMETICS giant Shiseido Co. Ltd. has launched an estimated \$1.7 billion tender offer to acquire Bare Escentuals Inc., one of the hottest brands of recent years.

Under the terms of the tender offer, which is scheduled to start in 10 days, Shiseido plans to buy shares for \$18.20 each, a 40.8 percent premium over Bare Escentuals' average stock price during the last three months, and a 39.9 percent premium over the closing price Wednesday. Once the majority of stock is tendered, Shiseido said it would buy the remaining shares for the same price, \$18.20, in a second-step merger. The offer was made through Shiseido's U.S. affiliate.

Shiseido said the Bare Escentuals board

See **Shiseido**, Page 8





## The Beauty Report

# Shiseido in Bid to Acquire Bare Escentuals

Continued from page one

will back the offer. Among the shareholders, Berkshire Partners LLC and certain affiliates, which hold about 16 percent of outstanding common stock, have agreed to the deal. In addition, Bare Escentuals chief executive officer Leslie Blodgett, who holds 6 percent of the firm, would exchange 40 percent of her stake in exchange for an undisclosed interest in Shiseido.

The acquisition would be operated as a separate division of Shiseido and its business would be managed by the current roster of executives, led by Blodgett, who is expected to report to Tokyo headquarters.

The deal is predicated on combining the strength of Shiseido's global distribution reach, particularly in Asia, and its prowess in research and development with Bare Escentuals' dominance in the still-hot mineral makeup trend and its expertise in marketing across all retail channels.

"This acquisition further enables Shiseido to move toward our goal of becoming a global player representing Asia, with its origins in Japan," said Shinzo Maeda, president and ceo of Shiseido. "We have known and admired Bare Escentuals' excellent team and their achievements for a long time, and look forward to their contribution to our combined group. The operational fit and future growth prospects make this an excellent transaction for our customers, employees and shareholders."

company's next innovation will be after mineral foundations. Recently, she said the company is working on creating new brands. To that end, the company has spun off its Buxom plumping lip gloss into a stand-alone brand.

But a small percentage of the company's current customers use its lip and eye products: 37 and 22 percent, respectively, according to the firm's investor presentation in November. One of its latest strategic initiatives last year was an aggressive product sampling program to entice customers to try its color cosmetics. The company plans to keep pace with that effort this year.

One of Bare Escentuals' greatest assets is widely seen as its ceo. Blodgett shuns the button-down, corporate approach of many of her peers. She also drives the creative direction of the company, including its upcoming, irreverent ad campaign "Rethink What Matters." Her humor resonates throughout the company. Case in point: An opening slide to a recent investor presentation read, "Going Bare. We do not live by the rules. We have our own."

In June, during a Q&A hosted by Cosmetic Executive Women, Blodgett was asked how the firm would succeed in her absence. She said Bare Escentuals' success in Japan and throughout Europe — where she is not as well known and adored by customers — was evidence that the brand's heartbeat was not tied strictly to her.

Blodgett's management style contrasts with the stoic and pragmatic approach of



Shinzo Maeda



Leslie Blodgett

Items from Bare Escentuals.



**“I couldn’t be more pleased to be joining forces with the team at Shiseido.”**

— Leslie Blodgett, Bare Escentuals

Blodgett, who joined Bare Escentuals as ceo in 1994, grew the company's sales to \$556 million by 2008, from about \$4 million. A total of 85 percent of the company's sales are in the U.S.

"I couldn't be more pleased to be joining forces with the team at Shiseido.... Together with Shiseido, we look forward to bringing our mineral-based beauty products to even more women worldwide," Blodgett said.

Bare Escentuals has been at the forefront of the distribution in the U.S. beauty revolution, combining midmarket specialty store chains such as Sephora and Ulta with a strong TV shopping component and a department store anchor. It also operates its own stand-alone boutiques.

The acquisition is expected to widen Shiseido's customer base and extend its product reach into mineral cosmetics, giving Shiseido a foothold in Bare Escentuals' key channels, including TV retailing and the Internet. It is also expected to strengthen Shiseido's presence in Europe and Asia. In addition, the deal would provide the makeup brand with greater access to Japan, as well as other fast-growing Asian markets, such as China. Bare Escentuals is the number-one makeup brand on QVC U.S. and Japan, according to the company.

Shiseido is likely to offer Bare Escentuals a platform to broaden its product assortment beyond mineral makeup and foundation in a more meaningful way. One of the challenges facing the fast-growing company is the need to move beyond its breakthrough mineral franchise. Blodgett has often been asked by analysts what the

Shiseido.

Shiseido, which generated \$7.5 billion in 2009, has a strong concentration in skin care, including the main Shiseido brand. Its other brands include Clé de Peau Beauté premium makeup, Carita skin care, the Nars makeup artist brand, Zotos professional hair care and the fragrance subsidiary Beauté Prestige International, which includes fragrances by Issey Miyake, Jean Paul Gaultier and Narciso Rodriguez. There also is the Aupres color cosmetics brand established in China, and the upscale Ipsa beauty brand.

Almost 40 percent of Shiseido's 2009 sales were generated overseas — it is in 70 countries — including in China, where Shiseido counts itself as one of the top three brands there and elsewhere in Asia.

In 2008, Shiseido kicked off a major plan to make it a global player. A tough price war in Japan, where Shiseido positions its product in the midmarket, spelled faltering fortunes. Asia Oceania was the best performer overseas, with sales up 7 percent. In China, Shiseido has a strong showing and anticipates continued growth. It plans to reinforce its makeup lines for department stores there, and expand its specialty store network for cosmetics in China.

BofA Merrill Lynch acted as financial adviser for Shiseido, and Shearman & Sterling LLP and Mori Hamada & Matsumoto served as joint legal advisers. Goldman, Sachs & Co. acted as financial adviser to Bare Escentuals, and Ropes & Gray LLP served as legal adviser.



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## THE CULT OF PERSONALITY

If you thought Deadheads were die-hard, meet the obsessive fans of Bare Escentuals CEO Leslie Blodgett, who lives as proof that charisma is the *real* key to power. **Rory Evans** takes a short, strange trip on the Swirl, Tap, Bus



he very first woman at the front of the line sets the tone for the entire Texas road-trip weekend: "My husband had both his knees replaced two weeks ago, and they told me I could bring him home either Friday night or Saturday, and I said Saturday because I had to come here because you are like a movie star to me."

The like-a-movie-star is Leslie Blodgett, CEO of Bare Escentuals Cosmetics and frequent pitchwoman on infomercials and QVC. These days, she is also a likely visitor to a mall near you: The new-knees-husband lady has come to see Blodgett at an in-store appearance at Sephora in the Barton Creek Square mall in Austin. Out in the lot sits David Copperfield's former tour bus: Bare Escentuals has leased it for a year, toned down the pleather-banquette disco-mobile vibe with Target bedding and lots of Jonathan Adler needlepoint throw pillows, and hit the road for several multi-city road trips. The vehicle's Mylar wrapping features an enormous headshot of Blodgett—as well as images of makeup and brushes—and has been christened the "Swirl, Tap, Bus" in a nod to "Swirl, Tap, Buff," the basic instructions for using the company's breakout product, bareMinerals, the all-natural powder foundation that represents about 45 percent

of its roughly \$500 million in annual sales.

Bare Escentuals has actually been around since 1976, when it opened as a boutique in Los Gatos, near San Francisco. Among the brand's earth-priestess bath lotions and potions was an all-natural powder that appealed to women with rosacea, scarring, and other sensitive-skin issues. It was sold by weight—women would scoop it from a barrel, as if they were at Mr. Oleson's *Little House* mercantile—and made of all-natural ingredients long before the enviro-everything of today's products. When Blodgett took over the company in 1994 (after working in development for mega-brands including Neutrogena, Max Factor, and P&G), she recognized how unique the product was but also that it needed to be reformulated, repackaged, and remarketed.

And how far bareMinerals has come from its hippie-dippy roots! To be certain, it's still superpure: bareMinerals SPF 15 Foundation contains just five ingredients, most with names you'd recognize from seventh-grade earth science, like mica, zinc oxide, and titanium dioxide. In the pot (no more scoops), the powder looks like little more than tinted confectioner's sugar, but on the skin it becomes a scar-erasing, complexion-evening pixie dust.

Blodgett recalls that in the early days, "it was difficult to get people to try the product because it was so different and weird." Then she realized that if she could reach out to

women who had really bad complexions, bareMinerals would catch on. "I wanted to talk to the women who wouldn't go out because of their skin," she says. "I knew they'd realize that they could have beautiful skin and they didn't have to stare in a magnifying mirror and be depressed all day." Indeed, her most devoted customers seem to come from the Island of Misfit Cosmetics Shoppers—women with acne scarring or sensitivities who'd never successfully worn makeup until they found bareMinerals, often in their 40s or later. During the tour, many of them approach Blodgett to recount their fairy-tale-style awakenings, thanks to bareMinerals: "It took my boyfriend a week to figure out I was wearing makeup; he knew something was different but couldn't pinpoint it"; "When my older sister started using it, we all accused her of having work done." Then there's the fan in Austin, a fortysomething cherub of a woman in a mom cardigan and Coach bag, who walks up to Blodgett and says, "I just wanted you to know, this changed my relationship with my face."

In many ways, Blodgett herself is a bigger draw than the makeup, which, after all, is readily available at Sephora and Nordstrom. Women feel like they know her already—and in some sense, they do: Blodgett is on TV all the time. On air in 1997, she sold 1,300 mineral-and-brush kits in six minutes, wiping out the inventory; last year, she appeared for more than 60 hours. Each week, across all cable markets, her infomercials air about 450 times. Blodgett had good reason to think her makeup would sell: She's always been a devoted TV shopper, especially during bouts of insomnia. Knowing the products and pitch style that appealed to her just strengthened her skills on set. On tour, plenty of women admit to TiVo'ing her every time she's on. They tune in for her contagious, girl-friendly demeanor as she swirl, taps, and buffs someone into a makeover, for her self-deprecating humor, and for her impromptu anecdotes about her husband, Keith, her 15-year-old son, Trent, and her dog, Kiko.

But neither the powder's efficacy (skin luminizers and mineral makeup are growing product categories) nor Blodgett's tireless TV presence completely explain the



Bare Escentuals revolution. There remains a slight mystery as to why, in Austin, San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas, women show up by the hundreds at malls to wait in serpentine stanchions. How to explain, for instance, the group of women who visited Blodgett at the Austin Sephora on Friday night and then drove to San Antonio the next morning to see her again? Or the woman who fashioned a pair of earrings from the lids of bareMinerals pots and waited in line just to show her? Or the two friends who played hooky from their best friend's baby shower just for a Blodgett encounter? Or the lady who showed up with

to people. I think I put myself where I was when I was that age. You're 24? I got married at 24. You're 45? I'm 45! You're a Virgo? I'm a Virgo!"

The fancy psych term for this is "reciprocating self-disclosure." "The clichéd thing is asking a woman her age—that's a very intimate question. If you can pull that off, it's an extreme thing," says Frank Bernieri, PhD, the chair of psychology at Oregon State University, who specializes in the dynamics of face-to-face interaction. "To make the intimacy okay, you share information: I'll show you mine if you show me yours. You'd be surprised by what you can get out of the

"I don't think I trust myself, so I just listened to other people, and women told me what they wanted. For years, listening was all I did."

her two teacup Yorkies in a baby carriage, wanting Blodgett's picture with them for their "baby books"? (And how to explain why Blodgett cheerfully obliged?)

"People become famous for strange reasons," explains Travis Bradberry, author of *The Personality Code* (Putnam) and *The Emotional Intelligence Quick Book* (Simon & Schuster). "Big celebrities are famous because of media coverage. They don't really have to do all that much. When a smaller-time person becomes famous and draws people to her, it has a lot to do with her personality."

So what is it about Blodgett's personality in particular? She floats an unscientific explanation for her appeal: "I'm a huge goof-ball," she confesses. "Or I think it's a 'normal' thing, and I am very normal. People are used to seeing people on a pedestal, and they can only aspire to be like that. There's nothing aspirational about me other than my Gucci dress." What Blodgett calls goofy or normal, psychologists would call charisma. For every little detail her fans want to know about her, she's even more curious about them. This is crucial. Usually, during the first few seconds of conversation, she inquires, "Do you mind if I ask how old you are?" Sure, she's partly asking as a cosmetics CEO, to see how well her products are working (does this woman's skin look like she's 38?). But, more important, she's also forging an instant friendly bond. "I don't even realize when I'm doing it, but I know I do," Blodgett admits. "I also always ask about birthdays. It's a way I relate

stranger in line behind you at the bank just by sharing something about yourself."

But you've got to mean it. "In order to have this kind of emotional contagion, you have to connect with your audience," Bradberry says, "and that's hard to do if you're not humble or real." Famous people like Rachael Ray copping to horrible knife skills or Oprah calling out her va-jay-jay on air or, of course, Señor Charisma All-Universe himself, William Jefferson Clinton, pronouncing that he feels our pain, turn that page in Hollywood gossip magazines—"Celebrities Are Just Like Us!"—on its head: "That's What *We'd* Be Like if We Were Celebrities."

If you've seen so much as a nanosecond of Darrell Hammond doing his Bill Clinton, you already know there are some very clear physical components to charisma: eye contact, head-nodding, empathetic nonverbal reactions. What truly elevates the quality of an interaction—however fleeting—is when the listener "can focus with an intensity, look you right in the eye or right into your soul, and make you feel like the only person in a crowded room," Bernieri says. And there's Blodgett. At no point does the line appear to get shorter, but she never seems impatient or distracted. Each time she speaks to a fan, Blodgett leans slightly forward and rubs her



The powder that launched 1,000 road trips: Bare Escentuals bareMinerals SPF 15 Foundation and Full Coverage Kabuki Brush





hands together—as if she’s hungrily tucking into a holiday meal. When someone seems especially starstruck or self-conscious, she manages to create an invisible bubble of privacy—as she did with one awkward woman who’d driven more than 100 miles to get to the Bare Escentuals boutique in San Antonio. When Blodgett first approached the store, the woman jumped around pumping her fists like a Dallas Cowboys cheerleader. Then, when it was her turn to chat face-to-face, she broke into tears, gripped Blodgett’s forearm, and choked out, “*You’re beautiful.*” When Blodgett tried to aw-shucks the compliment off, the woman gripped tighter and repeated “No. You. Are. Beautiful. Inside.”

Blodgett hears she’s beautiful all day long. She insists, though, “When women tell me that, it’s not about me or my looks. It’s about the fact that I have given them something that they have fallen in love with”—and possibly because that thing also helped them fall in love with themselves a little bit. Blodgett is attractive, but in a relatable way, like an Almodóvar heroine, with dark hair, big eyes, and olive skin (she is equal parts Hungarian, Italian, Russian, and Lebanese). “I started wearing makeup the second I could, like any girl. Or like any girl from Long Island,” she says. All her life, she’s been fascinated with faces. When her mother learned about a cosmetics marketing degree at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, which required experience in the beauty industry, Blodgett went to Bloomingdale’s every day until they hired her to demo Chinese hair sticks. From there, she worked her way up to spritzing fragrance and working the Ultima

II counter. These days, on her many visits to the city, she often stops in at that main floor at Bloomingdale’s. “It’s still a trip.”

It’s also a bit trippy that the girl who couldn’t get a job at the Estée Lauder counter has made a scene at the Austin Sephora befitting a celebrity—catering minions pass hot hors d’oeuvres and champagne, a DJ has set up a booth in the back, and about a dozen BE makeup artists are working makeover magic on the eager crowd. For all the times Blodgett has made such appearances, she still seems self-conscious and almost embarrassed in the moments leading up to her big entrance. First, the DJ purrs into his microphone, “Ladies and gentlemen”—the “gentlemen” part is largely a formality—“please welcome Bare Escentuals CEO Leslie Blodgett!” and cues Fergie’s clean version of “G-L-A-M-O-R-O-U-S...” Every time, Blodgett squeezes her eyes shut, winces, and practically curls into herself like a fiddlehead.

But then she shakes it off—and she’s out there on the floor; hugging Mrs. New-Knees; fielding questions about Kiko; flashing, upon request, “rocker fingers” while getting her picture taken with a 20-year-old woman. As customers approach, she chatters away, clutching wrists. Some bring their Bare Escentuals makeup cases and ask her to sign those. And, considering Blodgett has grown the brand from a 12-person operation into a company of several hundred, she regards each vintage bag as a long-lost relative: “I can’t believe you still have this one!” and “Oh my God, you’ve been with us since the very beginning, haven’t you?”

Blodgett’s keen powers of paying attention have benefited her company, of course: “I don’t think I trust myself, so I just listened to other people, and women told me what they wanted. For years, listening was all I did.” Listening still seems to be the fuel for David Copperfield’s former bus as it snakes its way across Texas. “For weeks after I get back from an event, I have so many stories to tell my family,” Blodgett says. Maybe she returns home with tales of the big, memorable moments—such as the woman who got started on Bare Escentuals after her husband was deployed to Iraq and she “couldn’t sleep and was up all night crying and watching TV, and I saw the infomercial and bought it”; or the woman in the wheelchair who tells her, “It’s nice to be natural and pretty and fresh. I’m handicapped, but I’m not sick. I turned 50 this week, and coming to see you is my celebration.”

But the smaller moments count for something, too: At the Galleria in Houston, one woman walks up to Blodgett with a simple question: “Can I give you a hug?” Her response is just as simple: “I’d love one.” ●

## CHARISMA 101

• **TO GET USED TO STANDING BEFORE A CROWD**, the next time you go to a movie, during the prevues, stand near the screen and look out at the audience as if you were looking for a friend. Steve Cohen, a magician and author of *Win the Crowd: Unlock the Secrets of Influence, Charisma, and Showmanship* (Collins), says this is the easiest way to get “flight time—knowing what it feels like to have a lot of people look at you.”

• **DO EYE-CONTACT EXERCISES.** Learn how to connect with people by looking into their eyes and not glancing away, Cohen says: “The next time you’re walking down

the street, make it a goal to lock eyes with someone and not break the gaze. I know, it’s a lot like cruising.”

• **SYNCHRONIZE YOUR BREATHING** with that of the person who’s talking to you—this has been shown to increase a sense of intimacy, Oregon State University psychologist Frank Bernieri says.

• **PRACTICE DISCLOSING YOUR EMOTIONS** only through your facial expressions when people are talking to you, Bernieri says. Also, smile at strangers: “It’s the easiest way to enhance everyone’s quality of life.”



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**“The best beauty product is confidence. When a woman shows it, you think she’s hot, even if she’s not a beauty queen.”**

## The Entrepreneur Next Door

LESLIE BLODGETT

Few people had heard of Bare Escentuals’ BareMinerals when CEO Blodgett took to the QVC airwaves in 1997. After that sellout broadcast, the mineral-makeup revolution exploded. Famously approachable, Blodgett likes to personally answer customers’ e-mails.

**How to fake great skin:** “Apply powder highlighter underneath your foundation. It gives an inner glow.”

**Even better than lipstick:** “Try rose- or wine-colored eyeshadow on your lips. Apply balm, then press the shadow on top—it lasts.”

**Most reliable way to relax:** “I blast seventies funk music and dance.”

**Key to exec success:** “Be a sponge! Talk less and take everything in.”

**The best makeup M.O. is...** “Find what you think is really pretty about you and play it up. If you need help, call me. I’m serious.”



## The Mascara Maven

KAREN FONDU

Maybe she *was* born with it: Fondu grew up around her dad’s beauty salons in Arizona and New York. A longtime exec for Maybelline New York (maker of the cult favorite Great Lash mascara) and Garnier, she just became the president of L’Oréal Paris.

**Very sane beauty advice:** “You don’t always have to look ‘done.’ I’m high-maintenance during the week, but on the weekends, you’ll find me in my sweats.”

**Her morning routine:** “I apply concealer under my eyes and highlighter on my upper cheekbones and above my brows. It makes me look fresh and ready to take on the day.”

**Most unusual task:** “Often when I’m doing store visits or shopping on my own, I hand out Maybelline coupons to customers.”

**Her bliss secret:** “Learn to balance your time. When you’re home, be home. And above all, be there for special occasions.”



**“Bronzer is the most misunderstood makeup. A little on your cheeks and temples makes your skin come alive.”**

## The Legend

IMAN

The daughter of a Somali diplomat, Iman hit the modeling scene in 1975; two decades later, she helped transform the industry’s notion of beauty with IMAN Cosmetics, made for women of color. Today she also heads up the I Am African ad campaign.

**What she adores (besides husband David Bowie):** “My foundations. I created them when I realized that no self-respecting black model went to a shoot without her own, because makeup artists didn’t have the colors.”

**Her look-awake trick:** “It’s simple—sunglasses and a smile.”

**Hidden talent:** “I cook every night. I make a lot of Thai and Chinese food.”

**There’s no such thing as too many...** “Cafés. I have 400 from all over the world. It doesn’t matter if you’re barbecuing in one—you’ll feel like a lady of luxury.”

**Key to exec success:** “Don’t be afraid to admit you have no idea what you’re doing. It’s not a sign of weakness; it’s a sign of courage. I ask my mentor, [former beauty executive] Robin Burns, for help all the time.”



# **WOMEN'S WEAR DAILY**

**JUNE 2009**



# Leslie Blodgett: The Most Popular Woman in the Room

By Molly Prior

LESLIE BLODGETT KNOWS HOW TO WIN OVER A CROWD.

In an era of gloomy, recession-talk panel discussions, the Bare Escentuals chief executive officer had an audience of beauty executives in stitches Wednesday evening during a Q&A hosted by Cosmetic Executive Women, led by WWD Beauty Biz editor Jenny Fine.

"I like having everyone around," said Blodgett, referring to the influx of competing mineral makeup lines. Then came the zinger: "Just don't get too close," warned Blodgett. The unconventional ceo shuns the button-down, corporate approach of many of her peers, and speaks honestly — having long-ago checked her ego and pretense at the door. That approach has helped Blodgett court legions of loyal users and build Bare Escentuals into a \$556 million business, up from about \$4 million when she joined the company in 1994. Blodgett's emotional ties to the business are difficult to mask — even in front of Wall Street.

"I don't like earnings calls, because they scare me. I have to use language I don't like to use. I want to tell [analysts] how I feel and they just want me to tell them where our inventory stands," Blodgett quipped. "They want to see numbers on a paper." But storytelling, she said, is what built the brand, and what she will continue to rely on to fortify growth, particularly as Bare Escentuals rolls out to international markets via Sephora doors and on QVC. Bare Escentuals also plans to open a stand-alone boutique in London this fall.

All kidding aside — at least for a moment — Blodgett acknowledged life as a public company has reinforced the need for disciplined growth.

Often asked what her next trick after mineral foundation will be, Blodgett said the company is working on creating new brands. "It won't be just Bare Minerals anymore," she declared. The beauty game-changing Blodgett built her business on QVC

— when buying items hawked on the small screen was still considered taboo by many — and she is now increasingly enamored with another electronic medium: Facebook. She boasts 5,000 friends, the maximum allowed by the social networking site. "The Internet is no longer anonymous. I know their religion, what they ate for lunch, their boyfriend," she said of her Facebook friends, laughing. But connecting with the consumer — whether online, on her bus tours or at the boutiques — is Blodgett's mission. "This is not a marketing thing. It's not a stunt. This is our life." Case in point: Last month, Blodgett took out a \$40,000 ad in the New York Times, which invited readers to meet her for coffee if they were in San Francisco. "I'm not kidding," she wrote, and included her assistant's phone number.

The ads return on investment? "I didn't care if it worked. I believed in it," said Blodgett, dismissively noting the ad did result in a sales lift. It also drew some 30,000 women to the company's Web site.

The legacy she wants to leave is simple: "We're here to make people happy. I want people who are happy to be ecstatic."

Blodgett also wants the recession to just end already. "I'm shopping at Ross [Dress] for Less right now. It's a terrible experience." The audience roared.



Leslie Blodgett at Wednesday's event.

PHOTO BY ROBERT JACOBIS



# **WOMEN'S WEAR DAILY**

**MAY 2008**



# Blodgett's Community-Based Beauty Boom

By Jenny B. Fine

**RATHER THAN GIVE A FORMAL SPEECH, LESLIE** Blodgett, chief executive of Bare Escentuals, regaled the crowd at the WWD Beauty CEO Summit with a series of stories that had everyone laughing.

The personal touch is typical of Blodgett, who's on a first-name basis with many of her customers and names many of her shades after them. (Customers even named her dog, she told the crowd.) But behind the revelry lay the techniques Blodgett has employed to build Bare Escentuals into a \$500 million powerhouse, a feat that no doubt has the executive herself laughing all the way to the bank.

Blodgett's strategy of community-based marketing began in 1996, when Bare Escentuals was a bath and body company that made money in the fourth quarter — but not in the first, second or third. "I'd get up in the middle of the night completely stressed out and turn on the TV," Blodgett remembered. "The only two options were horror movies and QVC," she continued, brandishing a set of stacking rings she bought during a late-night shopping spree. "I made my purchase and I believed in the power of QVC," she said.

About eight months later, Blodgett herself was on the air. She appeared on the channel for the first time in August 1997, selling \$45,000 worth of product. In addition to the sales spike, Blodgett's appearance on QVC formed the beginning of an ardent consumer base for Bare Escentuals, which was solidified a year later with Blodgett's first live show on the network.

After that show, she invited the entire audience back to her hotel room for pizza. Since then, Blodgett has gone on cruises and bus tours with customers. "I don't like water that much, but we did it anyway," she joked. Overcoming her aquaphobia was worth it: After the cruise, four attendees sent Blodgett a letter (which she keeps in a bedside file), writing "These friendships have afforded us some wonderful opportunities for travel and laughter and have also sustained us through some difficult times. We now have a network of women who we know we can depend on for help, counsel and a good kick in the rear, if we need that."

For Blodgett, the letter summed up why the brand is booming. "That's the whole story," she said. "These women are now connected deeply and emotionally to us. They're part of the brand. They love the product. We love them. When people join our company, this is the type of stuff they read so they know what they're getting into."

Despite Bare Escentuals' meteoric growth, Blodgett still spends considerable time in the field, connecting with women, "keeping it real," as she called it. "As you get larger, it's harder to do," she admitted, "but you have to go and find out what people are looking for." And give it to them at any cost: At a recent Sephora event, for example, a woman told Blodgett that she couldn't use Bare Escentuals because she's allergic to cornstarch. Blodgett had a batch whipped up without the offending substance and sent it to her four days later free of charge.

She also uses her personal appearances as impromptu focus groups. Recently, at an appearance in the King of Prussia, Pa., mall, Blodgett asked attendees if they would rather use a moisturizer in a jar or pump, a quandary she and her team had been going

back and forth on. "Two people raised their hand for the jar. Everyone else voted for the pump. Done. We made the phone call right there," she said.

When the CEO isn't visiting stores, a team of 10 make-up artists performing "make-unders" is. "Their job is to listen, their mission is to make women beautiful one face at a time," Blodgett said, noting last year they performed 6,000 make-unders. "And we know that if they have a good experience, those people tell 50 people who tell another 50 people and that's the business. That's what I'm talking about."

Blodgett herself exudes an endearing confidence, one that customers — and those in attendance here — clearly find inspirational. After her speech, Lisa Price, the founder of Carol's Daughter, emotionally thanked Blodgett for her passion. "Thank you for sharing your stories and your passion," she said. "Thank you for touching customers and for understanding the importance of touching them



Leslie Blodgett

the way Estée Lauder did years ago, inviting people to department stores and helping pick out their lipsticks. Thank you for understanding that."

## Cosmoprof North America unveils

# DISCOVER BEAUTY

Sunday July 13 -15  
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### Discover Beauty:

A special section featuring an edited assortment of brands pre-selected to bring discerning retail buyers novel ideas and new brands from across the world. See new products from Australia, Canada, Chile, Italy, Japan, Morocco, Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, UK, USA.

If you are a retail buyer and you wish to meet one-on-one the participating brands please contact  
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### How Key Retailers Are Envisioning Big Business with Niche Brands

Women's Wear Daily in cooperation with Cosmoprof North America present their second annual conference to give event attendees insight from successful retailers on the growing demand to introduce new niche beauty brands to their existing cosmetic assortments. **Featuring Debbie Murtha, Senior Vice President Cosmetics Macy's, Courtney Baber, General Manager C.O. Bigelows and Norma Knudsen, Executive Vice President, Merchandising; Chief Operating Officer Regis Corporation / Trade Secret - Pure Beauty.** Moderated by WWD's Andrea Nagel.

Join us to Discover Beauty.  
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**Debbie Murtha**  
Senior Vice President Cosmetics Macy's



**Courtney Baber**  
General Manager C.O. Bigelows



**Norma Knudsen**  
Executive Vice President, Merchandising; Chief Operating Officer Regis Corporation / Trade Secret - Pure Beauty



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# **NEW YORK TIMES AD THURSDAY STYLES**

**MAY 28, 2009**



# The advertising experts tell us that people don't read lots of copy.

I really hope not because this cost a fortune.

**MAYBE YOU'VE HEARD OF US. IF YOU HAVE, IT'S MOST LIKELY BECAUSE SOMEONE TOLD YOU ABOUT US.** We aren't the type to swing from chandeliers to get noticed (although we do have a fondness for chandeliers—they appear in every one of our boutiques). You also won't find us hiring celebrities to speak for us. Don't get us wrong, we love famous people, but we just don't feel we need to pay them to talk about our products.

Back to the reason for this letter. **WE ARE THE PEOPLE BEHIND bareMinerals, THE GREATEST MAKEUP ON THE PLANET. WOMEN OFTEN TELL US THAT OUR PRODUCTS HAVE CHANGED THEIR LIVES.** We love hearing this and believe it based on all the awesome emails we receive.

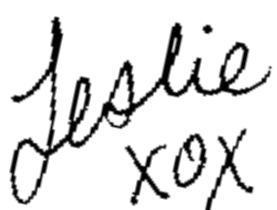
**WE ARE PRETTY MUCH EXPERTS ON THE SUBJECT OF SKIN. OUR FOUNDATION IS THE MOST POPULAR PRODUCT OF THEM ALL. IT HAS WON A GAZILLION AWARDS, AND MILLIONS OF WOMEN USE IT.** We're really proud of our products and how they perform. If you want a foundation that gives you stunning skin and *feels* like your bare skin—**bareMinerals** is for you.

We do love our products, but we love our customers more. This note is also a big thank you to all the women that believe in us. It's all about keeping it real, sharing stories and meeting with women one-on-one at our boutiques, Sephora, Ulta, and some department stores. We think if you try **bareMinerals** for yourself, you will be amazed at how really incredible it is. If you don't believe us, ask someone you know. In fact, we've found that many dental hygienists use our products. Next time you're getting your teeth cleaned, just ask her.

Anyway, we just wanted to tell you that we're here, **WE HAVE THE BEST PRODUCTS FOR YOUR SKIN**, and we really care about making women happy. Thanks for reading this long thing. My husband was convinced you wouldn't read this far (and he's not even an ad exec).

And if you're ever in San Francisco, maybe we can chat over a cup of coffee. I'm not kidding. Call our main office line at 415-489-5000. Generally Hilda answers the phone.

Lots of Love,



Leslie Blodgett  
CEO OF BARE ESSENTUALS

