

Nadine Heubel talks power of partnership ahead of Seatrade Cruise Global



This year, Seatrade Cruise Global recognized that retail is a growing vertical in the cruise industry and that it has been missing in the conference's programming previously.

[The Retail Day](#), which takes place on April 10 and is organized in partnership with *The Moodie Davitt Report*, kicks off with a cruise line CEO Q&A session, which will focus on how cruise retail plays an increasingly critical role in shaping the guest experience. The discussion will cover challenges and opportunities for retailing, space and profitability, key consumer groups, product and store development, plus how partnerships in the industry are evolving.

The Retail Day's central theme is the cruise trinity. So, it's no surprise there will be a trio of cruise

retail heavyweights - brand owner (LVMH), cruise line (Carnival) and concessionaire (Starboard) - on hand to cover how each partner views the cruise industry trinity, how they see the relationships today and tomorrow, and crucially how they can collaborate more deeply for the benefit of the guest via retail stores on board, promotional offers and partnerships.

Currently Seatrade's retail ambassador Nadine Heubel's involvement with the cruise line began with a podcast about the event, to generate awareness about cruise retail in general, followed by an hour-long session on retail, last year. Heubel says it was then that the Seatrade team realized it wasn't giving retail enough airtime. She says she knew having a whole day dedicated to retail would enrich the Seatrade conference, which is recognized as the biggest cruise conference in the world.

The content program is focused on exploring new trinity relationships within cruise. While many in travel retail consider the trinity relationship as one between airport, travel retailer and brand, Heubel thinks it's just as important for cruise operators to consider a similar dynamic as they dedicate significantly larger spaces to retail on board their ships. "While there are existing trinity relationships within cruise retail, with players such as Gebr. Heinemann, Starboard, Harding+, MSC and others, it's growing bigger. There is plenty more that can happen in the marketplace and SeaTrade wants to be where learnings take place and partnerships are forged," she says.

One discussion feels long overdue for Heubel, and that's looking into how cruise ports can be brought into the retail equation to work more closely with operators. She says: "We want to leverage the participation of the ports which are already present at Seatrade, many of them are even exhibiting. Traditionally they have never been part of the retail conversation but they absolutely should be."

She adds that the overarching goal is that Seatrade hopes to spark conversations and really support elevating cruise retail to the next level.

Mega ships from major operators

An impressive number of new ships have launched into the market recently, and Heubel shares the common theme is that they all celebrate a custom approach to creativity in retail. "One of these new ships is close to my heart from previously working on the retail concept when I was with Heinemann. Royal Caribbean's *Icon of the Seas* has an amazing luxury offer on board, including pre-owned luxury accessories," says Heubel. This aligns with her role as Global SVP Revenue at the start-up Reclaim, which she believes is redefining the luxury category in travel retail.

Alongside *Icon of the Seas*, Heubel considers *Sun Princess* with Harding+ and *Carnival Jubilee* with Starboard as stand out retail offers. "These are all very different and it comes from a tailor-made offering focused on the cruise brands themselves - each cruise operator pitches each ship differently and the retail reflects that dynamic," she says.

The rise of retailainment

More and more space is being allocated to cruise retail. Now it's about curating an attractive assortment, according to Heubel. She says it not just one size fits all; it's much more about discovery. Retail has become a complete integration into the whole experience of a cruise ship; it's being designed around the sports activities on deck, as well as entertainment.

"From ice rinks and 3D cinemas to innovative spa treatments, if brands want to keep up with these developments and be noticed, they have to be different in their offer. It's all about discovery, which is why we are seeing a lot of innovation and more 'first at sea' concepts in cruise retail. It's an exciting time to be having these conversations," she concludes.