

Gilted Age

As its men's business continues to grow, Gilt Groupe is investing in the category with a new site. << By Jocelyn Anderson



Gilt Groupe's men's business is about to get a major boost.

Next month, the New York-based e-commerce company is launching a separate, full-priced website that will offer men's apparel, accessories, athletic gear, gadgets and more, all with additional fashion editorial content aimed at educating guys about style.

Meanwhile, the Gilt Man tab on Gilt.com continues to offer flash sales for men every day.

"Gilt Man will remain just as it is today, and this will be a separately branded site with its own look and feel and brand identity," said Gilt Man President John Auerbach (above).

The new site will ship product internationally, but focus on established customers in the U.S. And while the footwear roster is still under wraps, Auerbach said it reflects the trends in the market now.

"We've seen the re-emergence of real, quality [men's] footwear," he said. "We're pushing our guys, as we do on Gilt Man, to really invest in proper shoes that can be in their wardrobes for years. There should be something for everybody, and the content will be there to let you know which style is the right one for you."

Here, Auerbach shares the finer points of starting a new venture with a very distinct consumer in mind.

1. Why did the company want to launch a completely separate site?

JA: It's really the natural next step, following the amazing success of Gilt and Gilt Man. The new site will allow us to extend our footprint across the entire retail spectrum, deepening our relationships with many of our brands and allowing us to serve our customer better. We've also developed tremendous expertise in technology, fulfillment, user experience, and we can put it to use in a new way with this new site.

2. This is Gilt's first full-priced site. Why did you decide to start with men?

JA: We were the first to launch a dedicated men's entrance on Gilt. We're taking this step for the same reason. Men shop very differently than women, and we believe they deserve an e-commerce experience designed specifically for their needs.

3. How will it be different from what is already out there?

JA: The idea is that we want this to be a trusted resource in a lot of different ways for the world's best clothing, accessories and gear, but also for advice and information on how customers can incorporate those things into daily life with confidence and style. It goes to the way men and women shop: Women tend to buy something they like and then find an occasion to wear it, while men generally think about the occasion and then outfit themselves accordingly. The idea is that the new site will reflect this distinction, offering guys the clothing advice they need to look their best, whatever setting they find themselves in.

4. In view of the added competition in the marketplace, are you changing your strategy?

JA: This has been in the works for a while. Our sense is that most outlets treat men's retail as a commodity or an afterthought, and we want to do it differently. Everyone will have a different take on it, and we're excited to share ours with everybody in July.

5. How is Gilt Groupe's men's business doing?

JA: We are on a \$100 million runway for our Gilt Man business now. We've seen tremendous strength in the men's market. Men now really want to dress up more and pull it together. That's where we can step in, to help guys with a curated selection of product, as well as with tips on the finer points of dressing well.

6. How do you decide what product makes the cut?

JA: We've been in the market for a long time, working with experienced merchants to create the right mix of fashion product versus wardrobe staples that every guy needs. You'll also find things on the site that you wouldn't expect, whether it's cool vintage products or any number of things. ... We want this to be a one-stop shop for guys for everything they need for their lifestyle, from the office to the weekend.

7. What kind of footwear range are you looking to carry?

JA: We're not releasing brands yet, but we are going to be offering more than 20 brands of footwear all the way from casual to dress. And we're excited about each and every one of them because they all have a unique point of view. Everything we've chosen can stand on its own within our assortment.

8. What has been the biggest challenge surrounding the launch?

JA: Because this is a standalone site with a separate look, feel and brand identity, there are a tremendous number of moving parts. It starts with the best product, but we have to photograph [it] and have the copy and guidance that we want to offer the customer. To bring all this together is quite an undertaking, but at the same time, that's the fun part of working at a growing company like Gilt.

9. Is there anything you can share about the content?

JA: The content is there to give our customers guidance and our point of view on what they are wearing and how they should wear it. It will be a database of how-to content, as well as certain relevant trends or styles we think men should be aware of. And everything will be shoppable. That's where we are focusing the content, on making the experience better, more seamless and relatable to our male population.

10. Is a full-priced women's site a possibility down the line?

JA: You know, I would say stay tuned. We're looking at all our businesses and determining where to go next and where it makes sense to expand, so nothing is out of the question. We felt like, at this point, men could really use this experience, and there is a place in the market for this with men.