



INDUSTRY DEALMAKER

Allan Ellinger on the state of the industry and his favorite mergers. *By Karen Alberg Grossman*

Delivering Good, the charity you founded as Fashion Delivers, is one of our industry's most respected 501(c)3s. How did it start?

In September 2005, my wife and I were watching a telethon for the victims of hurricanes Rita and Katrina. I was so moved that I decided that in addition to writing a check, I'd organize a group of manufacturer friends to contribute clothes to the victims. I called 40 companies; all agreed to participate. I also convinced four major banks to give us cash. Thirty years later, after merging with K.I.D.S., Delivering Good has donated \$1.8 billion worth of product worldwide.

Wow! Can we backtrack to how you got into the M&A business?

I started with a brief stint in retail directly out of college. I then switched to wholesale, gaining experience running every facet of a fashion company. This serendipitously prepared me to form MMG Advisors.

How many deals would you guess you've put together and what were the best ones?

I've been doing this for 30 years, but I've never counted. We strive to do deals that are strategic, sustainable, and result in happy buyers and sellers. It's an incredible feeling when that happens. I'm very proud of the value we've added to every transaction, the personal wealth we've created for our clients and the companies we've helped build via acquisitions. While there's a buyer and seller in every deal, few

are actual mergers. In fact, my only true merger was Fashion Delivers joining with K.I.D.S. to form Delivering Good. And my second marriage!

Who were your mentors and what did you learned from them?

John Kornblith, the Chairman of Intercontinental Apparel, an amazing man who taught me how to bring inspirational leadership to an organization, and how to always put the customer first. He not only ran Pierre Cardin but also owned 21 McDonald franchises; every Wednesday was Big Mac day! We had so much fun at that company but more importantly, he encouraged me to push my creative business ideas to the limit. He gave me a rope with no end.

Your biggest career mistake?

Accepting the presidency of a men's tailored clothing company without doing sufficient due-diligence on the company's finances and corporate culture. I stayed for four months.

What surprises you today about the state of our industry?

The enormous amount of consolidation, and the speed with which our industry has been impacted by digital commerce.

The retailers you most admire and why?

Nordstrom, because of their customer service, corporate culture and the way that management has not allowed the store to become promotional. Zara, because of how they've perfected their supply chain.

The brands you most admire and why?

Starbucks. I believe it has the most loyal, dedicated and committed customer base.

What advice would you give a young person coming into the apparel business?

Focus on product, supply chain and the economics that drive businesses. Don't try to be an overnight success. Build on a solid foundation of knowledge and experience. Choose your mentors wisely.

You've stepped down as Board Chairman of Delivering Good; do you plan to retire?

No: I now chair the Nominating Committee to ensure we have the next generation of leadership for long-term sustainability. I hope to stay in the game at both MMG Advisors and Delivering Good as long as I can add value and remain relevant. Both organizations are part of my legacy; it's wonderful to think I've made a difference. [mr](#)

