

FREE PDF GUIDE

A COMPREHENSIVE
GUIDE ABOUT
DEPARTMENTS
INSIDE A
FASHION
COMPANY

GLAM OBSERVER

Are you passionate about fashion but feeling lost when it comes to understanding what are the different departments inside a fashion company and therefore what career options do you have?

Trust me, I've been there too. Upon graduating when I decided to start my career journey in fashion, I found myself scratching my head, trying to figure out which fashion job would suit me best.

It seemed like the only roles people talked about were the obvious ones like designer and stylist. But deep down, I knew there had to be more roles and departments to running a fashion business. That's when I decided to create Glam Observer in 2014, the very platform you're reading right now.

My mission? To bring clarity to the confusion and offer a helping hand to all of you who share my passion for fashion. Having worked with renowned fashion houses like Alexander McQueen, Yoox-Net-A-Porter, and Kering, I've gained a treasure trove of insider secrets about what the industry truly looks for when hiring, and how things operate behind the scenes.

In this guide I'll take you through the various departments inside a fashion company. If you're dreaming of a career in fashion but aren't quite sure which department suits you best or you just want to have a better understanding of the industry, get comfy because we will chat about everything you need to know. So, let's take a friendly stroll through the fashion industry and explore the departments that typically shape its fascinating landscape!

With love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Giada". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'G'.

Glam Observer Founder and CEO



12 main departments inside a fashion company



There are many departments inside a fashion company. There aren't only fashion designers to run one of the top industries in the world. Creative and business-oriented careers are equally represented.

It's essential to keep in mind that each company has its unique structure, with varying departments and roles.

Smaller brands, startups, and different companies might have different structures, which could be more complex or streamlined.

So, the departments we'll explore in this PDF guide aren't set in stone. However, I'll do my best to cover the departments commonly found in luxury brands, drawing from my experience working with esteemed fashion and luxury companies.

Design Department

Inside the Design Department, you can find the team of designers headed by the Creative Director and head of designers. While you might be familiar with one Creative Director associated with a fashion house, he/she gives the overall direction but he is not the only person responsible for designing the entire collection; he has a whole team of designers assisting him. Together they work on different collections and product categories: shoes designers, jewelry designers, bags, women, men.. etc.



Fashion designers develop creative concepts and themes for each collection. They conduct research, gather inspiration, and create mood boards to establish the overall aesthetic and direction of the brand. They then make detailed sketches and technical drawings of garments, accessories, and other fashion items, select the appropriate fabrics, materials, and trims for each design, and create the pieces on a sewing machine or by hand.

The Design Department collaborates with pattern makers to translate the design sketches into patterns, which serve as the blueprint for creating garments. Designers also participate in fittings and work closely with tailors and dressmakers to ensure that the garments fit properly and align with the original design. They make necessary adjustments to achieve the desired fit and silhouette.

Production and Manufacturing Department

The production and manufacturing department includes Modellista (from Italian), CAD Industrialization Specialists and Pattern Makers.

Their job is to transform the sketches of the design team into tangible products, so that it is possible to actually produce them. bridging the gap between imagination and practicality.

Pattern makers evaluate all types of constructions, processes and materials applied, developing the models on the shape and creating the CAD paper patterns following the instructions for the correct production of the product.

Pattern makers also anticipate the problems of product industrialization and identify the most suitable processing methods, collaborate with the product development team and prototyping to collect all the information needed to make the product.

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Product Development Department

This department oversees the entire lifecycle of a particular product category, such as accessories, women's wear, or shoes. Responsibilities span from initial conceptual design and sample mock-up to coordinating with suppliers and other departments, culminating in the final production phase.

Product developers collaborate with manufacturers by monitoring supplier performance and delivery schedules, negotiating prices, and analyzing product costs.

They also assist internal and external designers with design modification, recommend manufacturing techniques, construction, and materials to reduce price and/or improve manufacturability while maintaining design and quality, and manage the prototyping and sampling phases.



Styling Department

You might be familiar with personal and celebrity stylists who help curate the wardrobe of personal clients and create red-carpet looks, but stylists also work at fashion brands.

They use their skills to style products and create visually appealing combinations that highlight the key features of the products and communicate the brand's style and identity to make them more appealing to the customers.

Stylists build up the looks for:

- commercial and advertising campaigns (including lookbooks and catalogs)
- social media campaigns
- e-commerce images.

The **styling team** works with the creative director also to style the fashion show looks.



Photography, Graphic Design, and Art Direction Department

Fashion is a visual industry, so images are key.

This is why the photography, graphic design and art direction department plays a big role at any fashion brand.

The responsibility of this department is to produce captivating visuals for marketing campaigns, advertisements, and product presentations.

This department collaborates extensively with other departments, especially Marketing, to ensure that visual content aligns with overall branding and promotional strategies.

Headed by the Art Director who orchestrates the visual storytelling strategies and ensures cohesive brand representation across all visual mediums, this department includes photographers and graphic designers as well.

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Photography, Graphic Design, and Art Direction Department

The **art director** is responsible for overseeing the creative direction and visual aesthetics of the brand. They play a crucial role in ensuring that the brand's creative vision is consistent across all visual aspects. Art directors collaborate with and coordinate with the creative teams, including photographers, stylists, and graphic designers, to develop visual concepts and creative strategies for campaigns, editorials, and other brand visuals.



The **photographer** plans and executes photoshoots for various purposes, such as product campaigns, lookbooks, editorials, and advertising materials. They work closely with the styling department, models, and creative teams to bring the brand's vision to life through visual storytelling. They take care of post-production editing as well using software tools like Adobe Photoshop or Lightroom to refine the images and achieve the desired look.

The **graphic designer** in a fashion house is responsible for creating visual assets and materials that communicate the brand's identity, marketing messages, and promotional materials.

Buying & Merchandising Department

If you are looking for a role that mixes management (80%) and creativity (20%) and you consider yourself a person who loves numbers and strategies, then this could be the department of your dreams.

Tasked with managing the intersection of creativity, market trends, and consumer demands, buyers and merchandisers play a critical role in ensuring the right products are available at the right time and in the right quantities at a store.

They analyze past sales and trends to predict what the customers will want in the future, and use data to provide guidelines to the design and production teams regarding what should be included in the assortment of a store to make sure that the brand is going to sell.

The merchandising and buying department serves as a bridge between creative design and commercial success in the fashion industry. By carefully curating product assortments, managing supplier relationships, optimizing inventory, and implementing effective pricing and promotion strategies, they contribute significantly to a fashion company's overall performance.

In many companies, the merchandising and buying departments are linked, so pay attention to job opportunities in these both fields and read carefully the job descriptions.



PR, Marketing, and Digital Department

Led by the CMO (Chief Marketing Officer) this department works on marketing and promotional initiatives across all channels: offline, social media, emails, newsletters, eCommerce... to build brand awareness with the final goal of driving sales.

This department includes public relations specialists, marketers, and digital strategists.

The marketing department manages season launches, campaigns, store openings, and events.

Social media and digital teams manage and implement social media strategies and work with celebrities and influencers to build the online presence of the brand.

CRM (customer relationships managers) manage the relationships with customers.

Copywriters are responsible for developing and editing content for the website, video, visual campaigns, emails, social media...

E-Commerce Department

All fashion brands sell their products online nowadays, so eCommerce managers and specialists are an important asset to take care of managing the online store: from digital merchandisers and buyers to marketing managers, customer care teams and those who update the website and product selections.



The e-commerce department holds a special place in my heart as it was where I got started in the fashion industry. I started as an ecommerce intern at Alexander McQueen and despite I was “just” an intern, already from day 1 I was taking care of analyzing sales, setting up the online merchandising, uploading the fashion show video on the website during fashion week, running day-to-day tasks to make sure the shopping experience was perfect, sending out the weekly newsletter, activating sales and much more. It was my ideal role as it was an intersection of fashion + the new digital platforms + analysis, which were my three passions.

Sustainability Department

If you want to take your passion for sustainability into the fashion industry, you will find your place in the sustainability department.

Today, more and more companies are looking for ways to become more sustainable both in terms of materials used and in terms of production reducing emissions, so they are creating more and more jobs in fashion sustainability.

Led by a Sustainability Manager, this department includes sustainability coordinators and experts. They collaborate with various departments to integrate eco-friendly practices, source sustainable materials, and implement environmentally conscious initiatives.



Supply Chain Department Department

The Supply Chain Department plays a crucial role in ensuring the smooth and efficient flow of products throughout the supply chain.

Working inside this departments are supply chain specialists, logistics experts, procurement specialists, inventory managers.

This fashion department is responsible for identifying and managing suppliers for materials, fabrics, trims, and other components required for fashion production. They monitor supplier performance to ensure timely and quality deliveries, coordinate the transportation of raw materials, semi-finished goods, and finished products throughout the supply chain, and manage the warehousing and distribution of fashion products.

The Supply Chain department also oversees the storage and organization of inventory in warehouses and implements quality control processes, conducts inspections, and works closely with suppliers and manufacturers to address any quality issues or non-compliance with regulations.

Legal & Finance Department

Inside a fashion company, there are also people who take care of its legal and financial aspects to ensure that the business is running smoothly.

Fashion companies often rely on trademarks, copyrights, and patents to safeguard their brand, designs, and creative assets.

The legal team is responsible for managing intellectual property registrations, monitoring infringement, and taking necessary legal action to protect the company's intellectual property rights. The legal team also handles the drafting, review, and negotiation of various contracts and agreements, including vendor contracts, licensing and distribution agreements, and employment contracts. They ensure that these legal documents protect the company's interests and comply with applicable laws and regulations.

The finance team, headed by a CFO is responsible for financial planning, budgeting, and forecasting. They collaborate with various departments to develop financial strategies, set performance targets, and monitor financial performance against goals. They analyze financial data and provide insights to support decision-making and maximize profitability.

Human Resources (HR) Department

Led by an HR Director, the Human Resources department manages recruitment, employee relations, training, and development, fostering a positive workplace culture.

Human Resources manages the employee compensation and benefits packages, takes care of their health and safety, and makes sure the diversity and inclusion aspects are preserved in the company. They also conduct employee training sessions and work on strategies to retain the talent in the company.

HR managers are also responsible for recruiting new talents. They make all hiring decisions, from posting the job offers to the candidates' selection process, reviewing applications, and conducting job interviews.

And that's a wrap.

An essential point to keep in mind is that although I highlighted managers and specialists, these departments are filled with a diverse range of talents, spanning from interns taking their first steps in their careers to seasoned pros.

If you're embarking on your fashion career journey, it's crucial to know that within these departments, there's a role for everyone.



For those at the beginning of their fashion career, the key is to pick the department that resonates with you the most and dive into an internship. So you can go with a PR internship, a design internship, a styling or buying one. Internships serve as your entry point into the fashion industry. And they aren't just about fetching coffee. You'll start with the most practical tasks to build up your career in the department of your dreams.

Need help landing the job of your dreams?

Check out my [fashion courses](#).

Read more career tips on glamobserver.com.

Register for my [free masterclass](#) about 3 unconventional strategies to break into fashion.

Thank you,

Giada