



Creator Spotlight: Andrew Goetz of (MALIN+GOETZ) – Skincare, Beauty, and Design Visionary

Monday, October 8th, 2018 by Haas Regen ()

THE CO-FOUNDER OF NEW YORK'S FAVORITE "LOCAL" APOTHECARY BRAND (11 STORES AND COUNTING) WAXED POETIC ON PROUST, PETS, AND POT — AND REVEALED WHY GREAT SKINCARE (AND BUSINESS SUCCESS) IS SIMPLER THAN YOU THINK.

Andrew Goetz and Matthew Malin are partners in life as well as in business. Since opening the first MALIN+GOETZ store in Chelsea in 2004, they have achieved international fame for their “uncomplicated luxury” skincare and beauty products, chic stores, and elegant, minimalist packaging and design. The firm also just opened its 11th store worldwide at **the IFC in Hong Kong (<http://ifc.com.hk/en/mall/shop/malin-goetz/>)**.

As the brand continues to grow all over the globe, the two founders have remained close to home and their original mission: To provide simple, balanced, high-quality skincare solutions to the modern woman and man at affordable prices. As if that wasn't enough, they're also dedicated to making ethical and sustainable business choices.

Anyone who's had the pleasure of speaking to Andrew will tell you he is distinctly unfussy and unpretentious — but also irresistibly witty. Interviewers, beware: It's practically impossible not to exceed your allotted word count.



malinandgoetz
70.8k followers

View Profile



[View More on Instagram](#)

299 likes

Add a comment...

YOU'VE TALKED ABOUT MALIN+GOETZ BEING NONTRADITIONAL, THAT YOU TWO TOOK RESPONSIBILITY FOR MANAGING EVERYTHING AND FIGURED OUT THE DETAILS ALONG THE WAY,

WEARING DIFFERENT HATS AT DIFFERENT TIMES. TELL US ABOUT THAT.

Yes, the whole provenance of how we started the company was unconventional and entrepreneurial. We didn't have a lot of money, we had a lot of ideas. We were bucking an industry that was extremely well-funded and well-marketed and well-established.

Talk about David and Goliath! We were so far off the charts. What we did have was a really great concept, which was very counterintuitive to how the industry had worked in the last 50 to 60 years, and how they had marketed.

First, the industry was always based on this concept of marketing to women. Men didn't matter. It wasn't that there weren't some unisex brands out there, certainly there were, some more successful than others, but the focus was: How do you market to women and how do you sell women as many products as you possibly — *humanly* possibly can? And creating steps, protocols, and regimens along the way. And what happened, inadvertently, with all this marketing, is that all of a sudden you would ask a woman, you know, "Tell me about your skin." They would respond, "Oh, I'm really sensitive. I have sensitive skin."

Well, I think if — from a biological point of view, maybe 10% of people have sensitive skin, and they should see a dermatologist. And while there are differences, physiologically, between men and women, obviously, a woman doesn't digest a steak differently than a man digests a steak. She may eat less of a steak, but we're all the same. We tend to think that we're much more special than we actually are.

What the industry has done is create sensitivities, because you're putting so much bloody stuff on your skin and they're asking you to do too many things. So there's step one, and then steps two and three, and then you have a reaction to step three, so then you have to put step four on — it's utterly insane. The added ingredients may make the product feel good, make the product smell good, but they're not necessarily efficacious for good skin.

So we looked at it entirely differently. **Our joke is, we want to sell you less skincare.**

SIMPLICITY FIRST.

Yeah, take the complexity and mystery out of skincare. Then it will be results-driven. We understand that things go wrong from time to time, the occasional pimple or spot – so we have products to address them, masks and exfoliating things. But we removed fragrances, colorants, silicones and anything unnecessary. **The fact is, you can do really, really well by just going back to basics: a great cleanser and a great moisturizer.**

I don't think we're clairvoyant. We had a really good idea and certainly a little luck falling into place. We're not geniuses, by any means. The most important thing is that we believed passionately in what we were doing, and it obviously resonated.

WITH STYLISH PACKAGING TO BOOT!

I think that's what Matthew and I wanted to do, a fusion of our two worlds. He was the beauty doyen — he came from a long history in the industry – and my background coming from furniture and design, which has a less-is-more philosophy.

At the time that we started the business, I think we had been together 11 or 12 years. We asked, how do we not only create packaging that is minimalist, but also a concept of the brand that is minimalist?

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE RETAIL EXPERIENCES YOU CREATE. YOUR STORES AREN'T JUST SHOWROOMS, THEY'RE DISTRIBUTION CENTERS, AND EACH ONE IS DIFFERENT. DO YOU ALSO THINK THE CLIENTELE VARIES FROM STORE TO STORE?

There's always a core clientele, but each neighborhood is different. From a design perspective, we always like to choose *neighborhoods*. We don't have a store at Rockefeller Center. We want to be in places where people live, because it's a replenishment business, and we want to serve a community.

And because we're serving a community, we also want things to be interesting. **So every store is designed by a different designer and has a completely different theme. We always take into consideration the environment of the neighborhood.** How do we sort of message that through the architecture and design?

For example, Chelsea, our first store, was pretty edgy. It's not too far from the Gallery District, and it's got a lot of modern features. Our store on the Upper West Side, however, was inspired by the "classic six" apartment — a wink and a nod to those who'd remember when middle-class people lived like this up there! Then we have our store at Seven Dials, in London's West End, which is very modern, very theatrical, with a big opening window. It looks almost like a diorama.

We wanted people to see it as something that belonged in the Theatre District and something classic with a modern twist. We wanted people to understand how and why it got there.

And I don't want anyone who walks into our stores to feel intimidated and say, "Oh my god, this isn't for me." I don't want to segregate out customers, at least here in New York, like you go here and you go there. Anyone can use our product — anyone can enjoy it. I wanted our stores to celebrate that. Regardless of your age, your gender — even demographics.

I think that speaks to the universality and the quality of our products, as well as the design, and how broad the appeal can actually be.



The MALIN+GOETZ store in Islington, London.

AND, NO MATTER WHERE YOUR STORES ARE LOCATED, YOUR PRODUCTS ARE STILL GOING TO BE MADE HERE IN NEW YORK?

Always. Everything's made within a 90-mile radius of New York City.

CONTINUING WITH THIS THEME OF COMMUNITY — AND HOW IT ALL COMES TOGETHER — CAN YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT ETHICAL SOURCING, ETHICAL LABOR, CRUELTY-FREE INGREDIENTS, AND HOW THOSE THINGS OVERLAP? DO YOU FEEL THAT'S SOMETHING AT THE TOP OF CUSTOMERS' MINDS NOW?

Yeah, I think it is at the top, but it's very, very complex and difficult. We always do our best to get to the next level, where we can guarantee ethical standards. For instance, we've chosen not to sell our products in mainland China, because if you sell any products in mainland China, especially if they're imported from abroad, you have to do animal testing. **So, obviously, we're dog lovers, and even if we didn't have a dog, morally, ethically, we would never — there's no amount of money that is worth doing that to an animal.** That's really close to us.



malinandgoetz
70.8k followers

View Profile



[View More on Instagram](#)

399 likes

Add a comment...

When we source our ingredients, we always say, “Hey, listen. **We want to make sure that we’re cruelty-free, not testing on animals.**”

Some can guarantee it, some can’t because there’s always a trickle-down effect and you never know the who, what, where of everything all the time. We try to find out when we can. And we do our best to make sure that we can guarantee it.

Certainly, in the skincare and cosmetics industry, if you were going to be 100% natural, the products would live in the refrigerator next to the milk and the mayonnaise with an expiration date. Nothing lasts forever. We live in a modern world where we expect to keep our cosmetics in our bathroom, and we want to be able to use them, and we don't want to refrigerate them, and we want the convenience.

And part of the price of that convenience is using preservative systems that are not necessarily detrimental to the health of your skin, but they are preservative systems, which does involve chemistry and biochemistry. That's science. And we live in a modern world. And this is what you're going to do.

I also like to remind people that Poison Ivy is also 100% natural. And so is Arsenic. Nature does things really, really well, and but also human biotechnology does things that are utterly incredible, too, and I always use this analogy: If you went to the doctor with a sore throat and said, "You know, I totally only can use only natural products. I can't take anything else." And the doctor says, "Well, I'm going to prescribe a lot of green tea and I'm going to cross my fingers and hope it works." You'd say, no, I want penicillin! Without penicillin or antibiotics, the world would look completely different today than it would have 100 years ago. The things that we can do with science is so important.

We use biotechnology to create ingredients so that they work and they're efficacious. But we never say that we're a natural brand because it's not who we are. It's impossible to do that. And I think there are people out there who say, "Oh, we're natural." But all you have to do is flip the label around and get to the second word, and you realize it's not.

We want to be transparent, which is why we always put all of the ingredients on the front of the packaging. They're there for a reason. If we can alter a product or make something better without injury to someone else, we're always going to go that route. Our names are on the bottles, and we stand behind that.

ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO YOU LAUNCHED YOUR WILDLY POPULAR CANNABIS COLLECTION
([HTTPS://WWW.MALINANDGOETZ.COM/CANNABIS](https://www.malinandgoetz.com/cannabis)), AN
"OLFACTORY DISPENSARY" OF FRAGRANCES AND CANDLES —

EVEN THOUGH YOU DON'T ACTUALLY PUT CANNABIS IN IT. THAT'S ESPECIALLY TIMELY IN TODAY'S CANNABIS-OBSSESSED MARKETPLACE. WHAT INSPIRED YOU?

Cannabis isn't a modern thing. People have been doing it for millennia in ancient China, in Africa, in the Middle East — and most recently in Europe, and I think it was an Irish chemist who started looking at ways to use cannabis in a medical format, and then of course we learned that it's very effective in treating glaucoma, among other things, as well as anxiety. It has a lot of great qualities.

But then it got stigmatized, of course, in the 1960s, when it became the torch song of a revolution, and also we became somehow more puritanical.

In addition to the historical background of cannabis, there's also my personal journey with it. I always like to say that I'm a pot smoker manqué: I liked the idea of smoking it much more than I liked the act of being high. It wasn't that I was prudish in any way, it just didn't react well for me. I didn't really enjoy the paranoia that much. Give me a gin and tonic, and I'll be a much happier camper.

But I loved the rebellion, and I loved everything it represented, so, you know, you smoke a little bit in high school and this and that — but I was hardly what you'd call a Spicoli character from *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*.

When I moved to Amsterdam in the 1980s, I was amazed by how ubiquitous cannabis — actually hashish, mixed with tobacco — was and still is. It was literally everywhere, you were constantly smelling it. I loved everything that represented metaphorically. It was liberating to think I could live in that kind of culture and have that type of freedom. It didn't exist in New York or anywhere else in the same way.

That hashish has a very dark, heavy, spicy scent — sometimes even chocolatey. And even though I didn't smoke it all the time, I had access to it and I loved the smell. It was very evocative. All of that is part of the story. A single fragrance may contain many different meanings.

TELL ME MORE. HOW DOES FRAGRANCE TELL A STORY?

There *has* to be a story behind it. What's the narrative? It becomes very much a narrative of memory: Proust dipped the madeleine into his tea with the lime buds, and all of a sudden, seven volumes later, he's remembered his whole childhood.

When you smell a fragrance and it reminds you of your dear old grandmother, you immediately love it. There's something emotionally warm about it. And if it reminds you of your wicked stepmother, you're going to be repulsed by it.

For me, every time I smell a mixture of tobacco and hash, I am right back there on my bicycle, riding through the streets of Amsterdam.



The concept of fragrances has evolved to become a luxury item, particularly in European culture, where you tend to choose your necktie or your dress or your hat or your gloves, and then you choose your fragrance. It's literally that last layer of clothing. In America, we're not trained that way. We're also much more hyper-clean. Like, *nobody* showers more than Americans.

All you have to do is get on the metro in Paris and you realize you're in a completely different culture in how they react to human perspiration. In the old world, they tend to want to cover it up, here we want to scrub it off. I don't know whether one is right or wrong, but that's the way it is. It's very subjective. It's not about right and wrong, but I do think there's a level of sophistication.

The reality is, most fragrances come from, or must contain, a musk ingredient in them. Musk, just so we're clear, used to be extracted from the anal glands of rodents, and there's a pungency to it. Nowadays everything is done through molecular chemistry — so it isn't cruel and terrible — but we're still looking to create that scent's molecular configuration because that's what will lift the fragrance up and make it a wonderful and evocative experience.

When we created our cannabis scent, it wasn't meant to be an exact replica of the skunky and hashy Dutch version, because we wanted it to smell good. And what we came up with — working with a perfumer — was a formula that was velvety, somewhat chocolatey, and smelled great, but we like, wow, this is really going to be trending towards a masculine scent.

I just didn't see it from a unisex perspective. But somehow it became very popular with women. It's really spicy, it's really beautiful, and of course, if guys buy it, that's wonderful, but it actually resonates more with women than it does with men.

DO YOU THINK IT'S THE NAUGHTINESS FACTOR?

I mean, we could have named it anything, and we chose cannabis, and obviously, it was meant to turn the knife a little bit, and I think also to bring attention to something. Actually, it was our hope to help make it more benign.

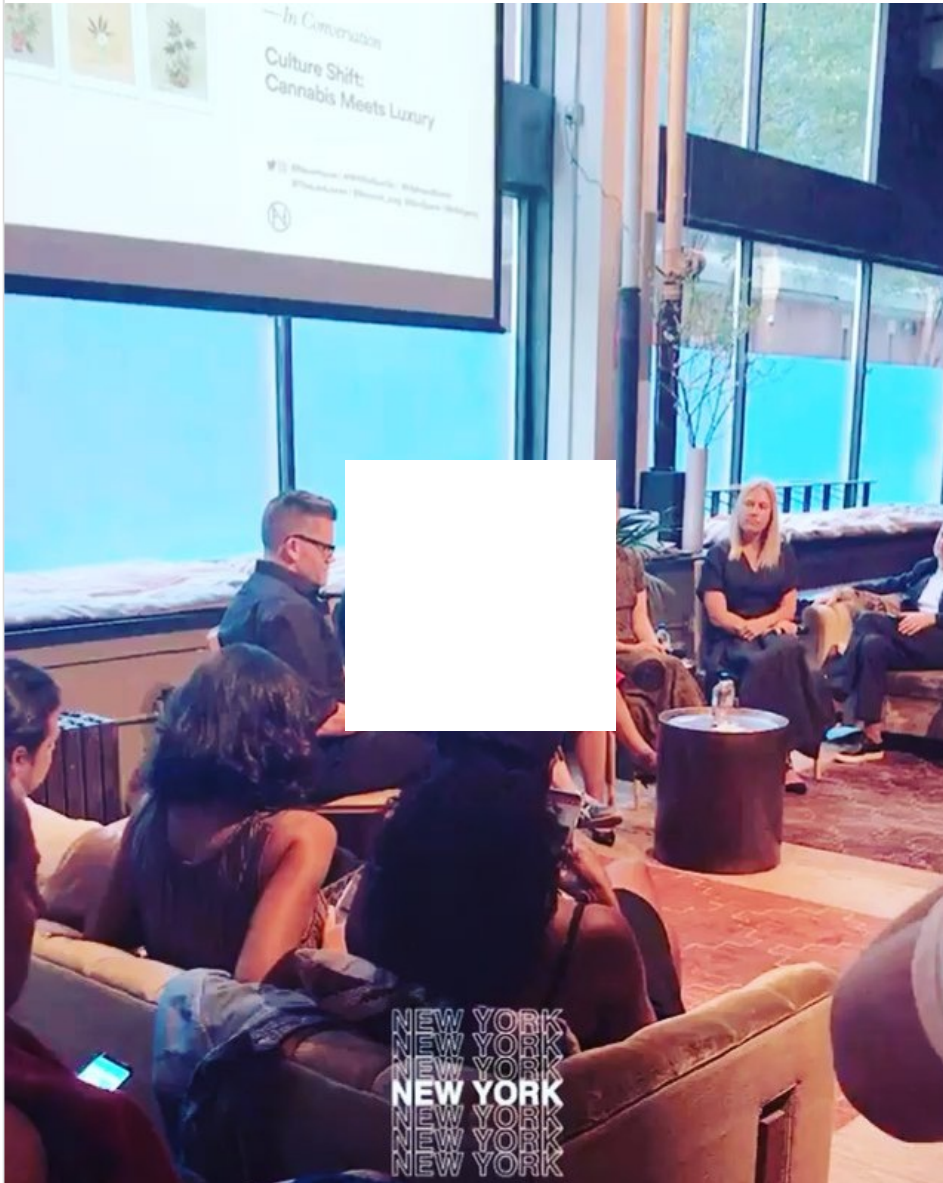
With cannabis or pot, there are social injustices involved. When I was the stoner kid smoking it in the bandshell in the park, you know, nothing was going to happen to me. But the same kid, living in an inner-city neighborhood, would have gotten arrested, they were taken to jail. And then, if you got arrested

three times for drug charges, they'd throw away the keys. Complete social injustice. That's just one of the layers that became very important in the marketing and development of this product.



818agency
NeueHouse

[View Profile](#)



[View More on Instagram](#)

51 likes

Add a comment...

I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT ADVICE YOU'D GIVE TO A MILLENNIAL OR GENERATION ZER WHO IS INTERESTED IN BECOMING AN ENTREPRENEUR, ESPECIALLY IN A BIG CITY LIKE NEW YORK.

There's no better place to be an entrepreneur than New York!

REALLY?!

Absolutely. The access to talent, access to other entrepreneurs and other concepts and ideas — a total creative environment! It doesn't matter where in town you go, there's somebody doing something really, really interesting. The inspiration is incredible. If we lived in Cincinnati, I don't know that we would be able to do it.

I need the tension of New York every single day to get me out of bed, the competitive atmosphere. That drive is part of our success. New York is just such an integral part of our brand. Being an entrepreneur here is incredibly tough, but incredibly rewarding. My favorite thing to do is exchange battle stories with other entrepreneurs. It's like a therapy session! When you ask, "Oh, can you believe that this and that happened?" — thinking there's a Murphy's Law and you're being singled out — you find out, *no!* We're all in this thing together.

WHAT HAS CHANGED ABOUT THE BUSINESS SINCE YOU AND MATTHEW STARTED?

I think when we live in a very homogenized world — an increasingly homogenized world — and this is one of the big issues with luxury brands, and one of the mistakes that many luxury brands make is that they have these beautiful products and they open stores in all the major cities, and then they open stores in airports, and the products are very nice and they're very expensive. But where is the exclusivity?

How do you define the luxury? And luxury is always traditionally defined by either craftsmanship — certainly, the price is part of luxury, but really, exclusivity was, for me, **one of the most important things about luxury. How**

could I get something that was so unique that nobody else had it, or very few people had it?

So how do you restore that concept of luxury, at least a little bit? I guess we make great quality products, and they're beautifully designed, but how do we create that experience in the store so it's not homogenized?

JUST FOR FUN, COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE: "OTHER THAN MY PHONE, I NEVER LEAVE HOME WITHOUT ___."

I always have a watch. I actually have my grandfather's old Omega watch, and it has that little preppy, striped band on it. But I was reading the *New York Times* and it was talking about fitness watches and I was like, you know what, I'm curious because I run upstate, and I always want to know how far am I going, what is my heart rate, etc.

So I bought this thing. It's not particularly aesthetic, which bothers me, but it has also become more than a little addictive. And for what? I'm going to burn the same amount of calories whether I have the watch on or off. It's ephemeral.

Ultimately, I'll go back to the aesthetic choice of something that I don't have to plug in and is, you know, 75 years old and more traditional. I like knowing what time it is, but no matter what's on my wrist, I'm always late for everything. That's the irony of it all. At least I know how late I am!

WE COVER CREATORS, AUTHORS, EXECUTIVES, CORPORATE INNOVATORS, THE RETAIL ZEITGEIST — AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN. [GET IN TOUCH \(HTTPS://MAIL.GOOGLE.COM/MAIL/?VIEW=CM&FS=1&TF=1&TO=HAAS@818AGENCY.COM&SU=%20LET'S%20CREATE IMPACTFUL ORIGINAL CONTENT FOR YOUR BUSINESS.](https://mail.google.com/mail/?view=cm&fs=1&tf=1&to=haas@818agency.com&su=%20let's%20create%20impactful%20original%20content%20for%20your%20business)

CANNABIS MARKETING ([HTTPS://WWW.818AGENCY.COM/BLOG/TAG/CANNABIS-MARKETING/](https://www.818agency.com/blog/tag/cannabis-marketing/))

HAAS REGEN ([HTTPS://WWW.818AGENCY.COM/BLOG/TAG/HAAS-REGEN/](https://www.818agency.com/blog/tag/haas-regen/))

INSIGHTS ([HTTPS://WWW.818AGENCY.COM/BLOG/TAG/INSIGHTS/](https://www.818agency.com/blog/tag/insights/))

LUXURY MARKETING ([HTTPS://WWW.818AGENCY.COM/BLOG/TAG/LUXURY-MARKETING/](https://www.818agency.com/blog/tag/luxury-marketing/))

SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTISE ([HTTPS://WWW.818AGENCY.COM/BLOG/TAG/SUBJECT-MATTER-EXPERTISE/](https://www.818agency.com/blog/tag/subject-matter-expertise/))

◀ **PREVIOUS**

([HTTPS://WWW.818AGENCY.COM/BLOG/CREATOR-SPOTLIGHT/VERONICA_CHAMBERS/](https://www.818agency.com/blog/creator-spotlight/veronica_chambers/))

NEXT

([HTTPS://WWW.818AGENCY.COM/BLOG/CREATOR-SPOTLIGHT/SARAH-MCNALLY-FOUNDER-MCNALLY-JACKSON-BOOKS-BRAND-BUILDER/](https://www.818agency.com/blog/creator-spotlight/sarah-mcnally-founder-mcnally-jackson-books-brand-builder/)) ▶

Speak to us IRL

[START HERE \(HTTPS://WWW.818AGENCY.COM/CONTACT/\)](https://www.818agency.com/contact/)

JOIN 80,000 MODERN BUSINESS ENTHUSIASTS WORLDWIDE

Enter your email address

SUBMIT

f (<https://www.facebook.com/818Agency/>) **t** (<https://twitter.com/818agency>)

G+ (<https://plus.google.com/u/0/+818agencyEightEighteen>)

in (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/818agency>)

ig (<https://www.instagram.com/818agency/>)