



NEWS RELEASE

## Vertical Brands Styling Tips for the Holiday Season

12/8/2021

December has officially arrived, which means it's time for holiday parties, cozy nights by the fireplace and sledding. Our Vertical Brands, Business Development Team styled teammates head-to-toe in some of their favorite pieces from our vertical brands to help you find the right look for all of your favorite winter festivities. You can check out (and shop) these looks below.

We also sat down with Gretchen Stryker, Director of Business Development – Softlines, to get the details on 2021 holiday fashion, expert tips for spotting trends and more.

### Q&A WITH GRETCHEN STRYKER

GRETCHEN STRYKER, DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT – SOFTLINES

#### How did you get into fashion?

I'm one of those people that knew I'd be working in fashion from the very beginning. I feel very fortunate about that because some people go through a couple of different majors in college, but I knew right away this is what I wanted to do. I was always sketching fashion, loved all things dress up and made my way to West Virginia University to major in fashion merchandising. To the surprise of my parents, I have found success, and I love my job. I feel so lucky.

Where do you find inspiration?

Inspiration drivers are shopping, street style, some runway and Instagram. At least quarterly, we visit metropolitan

cities that are fashion leaders where we are not only going into the highest fashion stores, but also some of the niche boutique stores that are up-and-coming.

Street style in some of the metropolitan cities are major trend drivers. One of the things that we challenge ourselves with on each trip is, "what's the look?" and you'll see that it's very clear. We just came out of New York, and literally everyone had more open leg jeans or pants with this chunky boot – the chunkier, the better. The shoe starts the trend typically, and then you kind of work your way up. So, we always come out of all of our trips with what we call a uniform, and then we build that into our next season.

With the pandemic, all of the social media tools have completely exploded with even bigger and better inspiration. There's so much content that can be found through influencers that's just so cool. In a time of not being able to travel as much, social media has been the most amazing resource. I also love following stores as much as I like influencer searching, because I think they do such a good job of putting together what's happening in fashion.

BEN WEISEL, CSC – PITTSBURGH, PA, WEARING VRST

**Insulated Shirt Jacket, Core T-Shirt, Commuter Slim Fit 5 Pocket Pants**

How would you describe your personal style?

Mostly classic and preppy, but I love to mix in all the new trends in my own way. I love plaids, puffer vests, a good puff sleeve, a high heel. But I also like to incorporate what's happening in fashion into my style. I've come to embrace the shacket (the shirt jacket trend). There are ways to incorporate the trendy pieces that are happening and still make them yours. I still wear mine with high heels rather than the coolest tennies.

What are your favorite holiday trends?

In general, I would say the cozier the better – all the cozy layering from a trend standpoint. For our vertical brands this season, CALIA merges performance and elevated details in a palette of creamy neutrals, VRST features outdoor elemental influences and luxe layering and DSG offers classic sport and heritage designs. Women's DSG is rooted in her forever favorite's fleece sets, and Men's DSG is rooted in modern throwbacks.

NAELI NAVARRO, STORE 670 – HILLSBORO, OR, WEARING DSG

**Oversized 1/4 Zip Fleece Pullover, Boyfriend Fleece Cinch Pants**

What are your favorite holiday pieces from our vertical brands?

In CALIA we have the most amazing **shacket** that I've seen a ton of people in the office wearing, and then we have our **cloud mock neck pullover** that's super soft. In DSG this year we have what we call the **fleece edit**, which is every silhouette of fleece in **women's** specifically, and in men's we have the most beautiful color expression in our

fleece hoodie that includes textures and neutrals. In VRST my favorite item for holiday is our **Merino Wool collection**. And then the showstopper, must-have is the Alpine Design **dream puff parka**. I bought it. It's just perfection. It's this long coat in this beautiful, weathered tan. There's some really good **outerwear** this year in Alpine, and we're also excited to launch a brand new **Alpine sheepskin, wool-lined boot collection that's a great giftable for the entire family**. A lot of good work is being done there that's differentiated; it's a nice breath of fresh air from traditional outerwear styling.

How did you pick the holiday looks featuring vertical brands?

Our team is amazing; they're literally the trendiest, coolest people, so I let them go wild. The looks feature the key items and trends we're focusing on – cozy, fleece, Alpine outerwear and the shirt jackets. They tried really hard to show the versatility of the product and ways you can dress it up or down.

LALA THOMAS, STORE 1149 – CHICAGO, IL, WEARING CALIA

**Eyelash Popover Sweater, French Terry Jogger Pants**

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Spread the word about vertical brands. There are so many unique, amazing items out there that I think would really surprise and delight a lot of people. There are some great gift options that are versatile, fashion forward and comfortable.