

In the Game of Retail, You Either Win or You Lose (a job)

Written by Marco Attard
10 April 2013

The once king of the retail **loses his head**-- *CNBC* reports JC Penney **chops "Genius Bar" creator Ron Johnson out** after all of 17 months as CEO, following his **failure** to turn the ailing retailer's fortunes around.



When you play the game of thrones you either win or you die, the HBO TV series tells us. A maxim that equally applies to the cutthroat world of high stakes retail!

Reportedly Johnson's plans of making an Apple out of JCP (via no-sale strategy, more fashionable merchandise and shop-in-shop investment) failed big time. Hedge fund manager William Ackman, the man behind his recruitment, describes Johnson's decisions as no less than "big mistakes" and "very close to a disaster."

"One of the big mistakes was perhaps too much change too quickly without adequate testing on what the impact would be," Ackman continues. Then again, didn't Johnson promise "a period of true innovation" for the retailer?

Johnson's predecessor, Mike Ullman, now returns to his former post as JCP boss.

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The news mirrors what happened at Apple back in October 2012, when it chopped retail head John Browett off after just 6 months. The former Dixons CEO was hand-picked by Tim Cook himself, in a very publicised move involving a golden "Hello" worth \$55 million spread over 5 years...

Apple gave no official reason for the ousting, but sources claim Browett wanted to make a Dixons out of Apple-- a leaner, meaner operation complete with reduced employee numbers and slashed hourly shifts. Such traditional retail thinking might have made Browett a hit at Tesco and Dixons, but Apple clearly did not wish for a cadre of unhappy Geniuses messing up its famed retail "experience."

The company is still looking for a retail head. Will it do like JCP and go for what worked in the past? Then again, just like in the land of Westeros, the game of thrones is never over...

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