



Differentiate By Design

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## **Xcel Brands Inc. Signs Menswear Licensing Agreement With Stars Design Group, Inc.**

### **Seasoned Retail Executive Neal Kusnetz, Named President of Menswear, will Lead Xcel's Menswear Division**

NEW YORK, Oct. 05, 2017 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Xcel Brands, Inc. (NASDAQ:XELB), a leading retail innovator, announced today a new, exclusive licensing agreement with Stars Design Group, Inc. to manufacture its menswear collections. Concurrent with this appointment, Neal Kusnetz will serve as President of Menswear for Xcel Brands, where he will oversee the licensing and growth of Menswear for Xcel. Mr. Kusnetz will also serve as President of Stars Design Group's Men's Retail Division where he will oversee sales efforts for the company under Xcel's brands. Together, these advancements position Xcel Brands for new growth opportunities by providing new and iconic branding in menswear apparel to retailers.

"We are enthusiastic about the growth of Menswear at Xcel Brands, and are confident in the expertise of both Stars Design Group and Neal Kusnetz to accelerate our success in this category," commented Robert D'Loren, Chairman and CEO of Xcel Brands. "We're pleased to be working with a cutting-edge manufacturer like Stars Design Group, and we're confident that Neal's background in unifying media and retail into singular brand experiences will help drive new solutions for our retail partners."

An industry leader with over twenty years of experience in design and global production for apparel brands in the U.S., Europe, and Asia, Stars Design Group will manage the production of Xcel Brands' menswear collections for the H Halston and Highline Collective brands, both of which are currently available exclusively at Lord & Taylor and Hudson's Bay.

"We are thrilled to be partnering with Xcel Brands, which is recognized throughout the retail industry for its strong brands, innovative business model, and forward thinking approach that creates truly seamless shopping experiences," commented Bret Schnitker, CEO and President of Stars Design Group. "We are encouraged by the success that Xcel has achieved to date and the positive impact this particular strategy has had on the bottom line for retail partners."

Neal Kusnetz will leverage over two decades of experience in fashion and retail to oversee the expansion of menswear at Xcel. Prior to joining Xcel Brands, Mr. Kusnetz was Partner and Senior Advisor of The Convergence Lab, a business development, R&D and consultancy think-tank focused on the convergence of technology, media and retail. Earlier, Mr. Kusnetz co-founded Robert Graham, the luxury men's lifestyle and fashion brand, and served as the brand's President for nearly 15 years.

"I was drawn to the Xcel Brands and Stars partnership because of its innovative, forward-thinking approach to apparel and retail, which aligned so well with my background," said Neal Kusnetz, President of Menswear at Xcel Brands. "I'm excited to join a team that's disrupting the way retail does business, and I'm looking forward to expanding its reach and distribution in menswear."

With the addition of Mr. Kusnetz and the new licensing agreement with Stars Design Group, Xcel Brands will continue to meet growing consumer demand for unique, high-value fashionable menswear. Xcel's innovative business model generates \$500 million in retail sales across all of its distribution channels.

#### **ABOUT XCEL BRANDS, INC. ([www.xcelbrands.com](http://www.xcelbrands.com))**

Xcel Brands, Inc. (NASDAQ:XELB) is a brand management and media company engaged in the design, production, licensing, marketing and direct-to-consumer sales of branded apparel, footwear, accessories, jewelry, home goods, and other consumer products, and the acquisition of dynamic consumer lifestyle brands. Xcel was founded by Robert W. D'Loren in 2011 with a vision to reimagine shopping, entertainment and social as one. Xcel owns and manages the Isaac Mizrahi, Judith Ripka, H Halston, C. Wonder and Highline Collective brands, pioneering an omnichannel sales strategy which includes the promotion and sale of products under its brands through direct-response television, internet, brick and mortar retail, and e-commerce channels. Headquartered in New York City, Xcel Brands is led by an executive team with significant production, merchandising, design, marketing, retailing, and licensing experience, and a proven track record of success in elevating branded consumer products companies. With a team of over 100 professionals focused on design, production, and digital marketing, Xcel maintains control of product quality and promotion across all of its product categories and

distribution channels. Xcel differentiates by design.

**ABOUT STARS DESIGN GROUP, INC. ([www.starsdesigngroup.com](http://www.starsdesigngroup.com))**

Stars Design Group, Inc. founded in 2000, is a global full-service apparel manufacturing group specializing in leading technologies to support clients from design, product development, production to delivery. Stars partners Bret Schnitker, Gerry Leonard, and John Seramur lead the global management team that combined have over 100 years of experience in apparel design, manufacturing and finance. The uniquely balanced approach of innovative virtually real 3D Design services, comprehensive fabric and trim libraries in multiple classifications, in depth knowledge of technical fit, constructions, dyeing, finishing and assembly, hands on production experience, comprehensive quality control, full logistics and in-house customs brokerage ensure consistent execution on multiple fronts. In addition, the production footprint of over 67 factories in 14 countries enables Stars Design Group to effectively manage broad classifications of apparel to meet the objectives and demands of the current marketplace.

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