

# Johan S. Ahlqvist

jsalink@me.com | 610 - 306 - 8188 | linkedin.com/in/johan-s-ahlqvist

---

## PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Visionary design and construction director with over two decades of experience in leading development and execution of retail environments for prestigious brands. Known for creating innovative, award-winning, and brand-defining store concepts across diverse markets, including national, resort, and specialty locations. A strategic partner in site selection, negotiation, and dealmaking, with a proven track record of restructuring and establishing development departments and leading multi-disciplinary teams to success while seamlessly employing cost-effective measures. Expert in utilizing retail design to meet business objectives. Adept at driving brand evolution, implementing standardized construction systems, and ensuring safety and code regulations adherence. Skilled in vendor management, budgeting, and project oversight, focusing on protecting and enhancing the integrity of established brands while fostering growth and innovation.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Oxford Inc. Retail Lifestyle Brands** — King of Prussia, PA

2015 - 2024

**Lilly Pulitzer**

**Southern Tide**

**The Beaufort Bonnett Company**

Directed store design, planning, development, construction, and maintenance for three national high-end fashion specialty retailers, overseeing 78 retail stores and 80 wholesale stores.

### **Director of Retail Design & Construction and Store Maintenance**

- Orchestrated the restructuring of development departments, overseeing Lilly Pulitzer's and Southern Tide's construction, design & planning, and store maintenance teams, directly managing four reporting managers and outsourced staff.
- Created innovative store brand identity, forward-thinking innovations, and future market initiatives to CEOs and operating committees, influencing strategic decision-making and driving brand evolution.
- Innovated cost-effective store roll out programs and developments, resulting in a 15% - 25% buildout savings with improved brand equity for all brands and increased brand visibility and recognition.
- Spearheaded multiple flagship designs and developments, branded mobile store concepts, and event shoppes.
- Negotiated a competitive fair and controlled contractor bidding process among competitive national contractors vs. regional or local contractors, resulting in a 15% - 20% reduction in awarded contracts for all brands.
- Formulated strategic partnerships with legal, brokers, and real estate to drive site selection, landlord negotiations, and dealmaking, resulting in successful store development initiatives across various locations, including national stores, resort towns, hotels, beaches, seaside areas, and unique pop-ups.
- Led the coordination and execution of new store rollouts, relocations, and remodels for multiple store types, ensuring flawless implementation of brand identity and initiatives.
- Implemented robust standardized construction systems, including establishing contractor pools, store bidding processes, and project tracking mechanisms—optimizing efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
- Managed high-level vendor relationships for store building, professional services, fixture materials, and furniture, ensuring meticulous attention to brand-consistent selections and fostering collaborative partnerships.
- Conducted rigorous real estate site analysis, investigations, surveys, and permitting processes, ensuring full compliance with regulatory requirements and operational needs.
- Oversaw corporate office design & planning and spearheaded the development of a corporate showroom in NYC, aligning physical spaces with brand image and values at an executive level.
- Ensured unwavering adherence to brand standards and safety regulations across all facets of store development, maintenance, and operations, safeguarding the integrity of the company's established store brands while driving forward brand evolution and the development of new store types.

**Bridal Group** — Conshohocken, PA

2001 - 2015

**David's Bridal & David's Bridal Europe**

**Priscilla of Boston**

**After Hours Formalwear**

Responsible for store design and planning for national and international small-box, mid-box, and high end specialty multi-brand retailer with 800+ stores; included creating and rolling out multiple store brands simultaneously.

**Director of Store Planning & Design and Construction**

- Managed project site investigations, surveys, permitting processes and ensured compliance with regulations.
- Coordinated new store rollouts, relocations, and remodels for the company's multiple brands, ensuring seamless brand identity and initiatives implementation.
- Served as a member of the corporate real estate committee, reviewing new markets and conducting existing market analysis to inform strategic decisions.
- Developed and maintained vendor relationships for store building, professional services, fixture materials, and furniture. Responsible for all material and furniture selections.
- Led construction projects and oversaw design and store planning efforts while serving as Director of Construction for After Hours from 2002 to 2006. Collaborated with leadership to establish an in-house development department.
- Oversaw the restructuring of the design department; led, trained, and mentored David's Bridal's brands store development team with four reporting associates
- Conducted research, design, development, and presentation of store brand identity, innovations, and initiatives.
- Presented new and future brand and market initiatives and designs to CEO and board members.
- Led corporate energy research and audit efforts, ensuring efficient and sustainable store operations.
- Spearheaded showroom space and corporate design office design and planning, aligning brand image and values.
- Acted as a critical partner and brand advocate, led site selection, landlord negotiations, and dealmaking, while also overseeing corporate store bidding and project tracking as chairman of the construction bid committee.
- Played a key role in the creation, rollout, and construction of the high end Priscilla of Boston store brand.
- Developed the company's David's Bridal store brand and design for European expansion, establishing overseas vendor relationships to support planning, construction, and real estate initiatives. Led the international store branded design initiative for European expansion, including opening David's Bridal UK stores and flagship store in London.

**Aerosoles** — Edison, NJ

1999 - 2001

Responsible for store construction, design, planning, and maintenance for national small-box specialty shoe retailer.

**Director of Store Construction - Design & Planning - Store Maintenance**

- Designed and rolled out new national mall, street, and outlet prototype stores, demonstrating innovation and strategic planning to enhance brand presence and customer experience.
- Managed budgeting, renovations, maintenance, and operations programs for the chain's 85 stores, optimizing resources and ensuring the longevity of assets.
- Acted as a partner, brand advocate, and coach to legal, brokers, and real estate, providing expertise in real estate analysis, selection, landlord negotiations, and dealmaking to ensure successful store development projects.
- Led the store brand developing team, driving the implementation of new store brand images while collaborating with adjacent departments to ensure alignment with overall brand strategy and objectives.
- Advised, trained, and mentored a store development team consisting of three reporting associates.
- Oversaw project site investigations, surveys, and permitting processes, ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements and timely project completion.
- Developed and implemented all vendor relationships for store building, professional services, fixture materials, and furniture, with a focus on quality, cost-effectiveness, and brand consistency. Responsible for all material selection to maintain brand standards and enhance store aesthetics.

**Eileen Fisher, Inc.** — Irvington-on-Hudson, NY

1997 - 1999

Responsible for architecture, construction, and brand development for contemporary high-end women's apparel retailer.

### **Project Architect - Architecture and Construction**

- Established a development department, providing leadership and coaching to a store development team with three reporting associates to drive strategic initiatives and achieve business objectives.
- Partnered closely with the VP of Retail, brokers, and real estate to inform on-site selections, landlord negotiations, and dealmaking strategies, ensuring alignment with company goals and objectives.
- Oversaw all aspects of design development, construction documentation, and construction, ensuring quality and adherence to timelines and budget constraints.
- Developed and implemented all vendor relationships for store building and professional services, fostering collaborative partnerships to support the company's growth and expansion initiatives.

### **SKILLS**

- **Flagship creation.** Revenue and market driving. Seen in: Eileen Fisher (Seattle); David's Bridal (New York, Chicago, London); After Hours (Atlanta, Detroit); Priscilla of Boston (Philadelphia, Atlanta).
- **Strategic negotiation.** Expert in implementing cost-effective measures across *all* brands, achieving on average:
  - 20% - 30% savings on construction technologies through auditing and restructuring vendor base through value engineering material and services partnerships.
  - 15% - 25% buildout savings, while improving brand equity and increasing brand visibility.
  - 15% - 20% reduction on awarded contracts for all brands through strategic negotiation.
- **Partnerships.** Extensive national and international resources, networks, and partnerships, such as with malls, permit expeditors, and digital specialties.
- **Innovation.** Frequent unique roll-outs; ideating prototypes for distinct markets; conceptualizing new store solutions.
- **Efficiency.** Retail store process; shopping flow and engagement; store interior visibility; dressing rooms.
- **Optimizing ROI.** Growing real estate and distribution channels while increasing revenue.
- **Customer and store experience.** Expert in Construction quality control, Bridging of architecture to construction, lighting design, branded scenting, and fitting area experience.

### **RECOGNITIONS**

#### **Media Recognitions**

- VMSSD Magazine Feature 2019 (Lilly Pulitzer)
- Design Retail Magazine Feature 2019 (Lilly Pulitzer)
- OPTO International Inc. 2019 (Oxford Inc.)
- VMSSD Publication 2001 (Eileen Fisher)
- Retail Store of the Year Book 1998 (Eileen Fisher)

#### **Awards**

- Chain Store Age Retail Store of the Year 2014: Fitting Room (David's Bridal, London)
- Chain Store Age Retail Store of the Year 2014: Soft Lines (David's Bridal, London)
- Chain Store Age Retail Store of the Year 2009: Soft Lines (Priscilla of Boston)

### **EDUCATION**

#### **City University of New York, New York**

BS Architecture

Post Graduate Architecture Education in Urban Planning

#### **Pehr Brahe Junior College, Sweden**

Economics Advanced Secondary Education

#### **Military Officer School, Sweden**