

# Influential Women Spotlights Maria Carlton: A Visionary Leader's Journey to Empower Brands and Individuals

SEVERNA PARK, MD, UNITED STATES,  
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-- Maria Carlton Launches Forth &  
Forward Advisory: Bridging Strategy and  
Execution in Retail and Beyond

Severna Park, Maryland – Maria Carlton, a distinguished retail and brand leader with over 20 years of experience, is excited to announce the launch of her new consulting firm, Forth & Forward Advisory. With a proven track record in driving growth, innovation, and transformation across global companies, Maria is poised to help brands navigate the complexities of modern retail through a unique blend of strategic insight and operational excellence.



Throughout her career, Maria has excelled in various facets of the retail industry, including merchandising, marketing, digital strategy, and operations. Her comprehensive understanding of the retail landscape has enabled her to turn bold ideas into market-ready results. Known for her ability to align teams and accelerate business outcomes, she has consistently led initiatives that strengthen collaboration, streamline processes, and deliver measurable impact.

In 2025, Maria founded Forth & Forward Advisory to address the growing need for brands to bridge the gap between strategy and execution. Her firm focuses on accelerating speed to market, enhancing cross-team collaboration, and ensuring that transformation initiatives are sustainable and effective. The name of her firm reflects her philosophy: “Forth” represents momentum and action, while “Forward” emphasizes targeting the right outcomes—together creating a framework for turning vision into velocity.

Maria's commitment to leadership and continuous learning led her to join the prestigious MIT Technology Leadership Program (TLP). This program offers her the opportunity to engage with global executives on topics such as artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and future-focused leadership. Passionate about empowering teams and fostering collaboration, Maria is also dedicated to advancing women's leadership and diversity in retail through her work with organizations like the Women of Color Retail Alliance.

Maria attributes her success to a combination of emotional intelligence and a genuine curiosity about people. She has built her career by understanding what motivates others, identifying challenges, and creating clarity during times of change. From leading global go-to-market transformation at Under Armour to advising brands through Forth & Forward, Maria consistently connects strategy with humanity, ensuring that people, purpose, and processes are aligned to drive organizational progress. She believes that effective leadership blends empathy with execution, and that this balance of heart and structure has been foundational to her professional achievements.

The best career advice Maria has ever received is to never put herself in a box—always remain open to opportunities that stretch her and trust her instincts. This philosophy has guided her through transformative work, public speaking engagements, and her enrollment in the MIT Technology Leadership Program. With a growth mindset and a commitment to embracing change, particularly as AI and emerging technologies reshape the retail and business landscape, Maria aims to combine her extensive experience in retail strategy with new technical fluency to help brands build human-centered systems capable of evolving with the world.

Maria encourages young women entering retail and technology to stay open, say yes, and trust their intuition. She emphasizes that some of the best opportunities may not appear perfect on paper—her own participation in a virtual roundtable on retail innovation and AI led to her learning about and being accepted into MIT's Technology Leadership Program, which became one of the most rewarding experiences of her career.

"For young women entering retail and technology, my advice is to show up and stay curious. Don't wait until you feel fully ready. Speak up, take space, and learn everything you can. This industry moves fast, but it still runs on relationships and creativity. When you bring authenticity and curiosity into every room, people will remember you."

Maria identifies the integration of technology as both the biggest challenge and opportunity in retail today. AI and automation are transforming design, marketing, and sales, but their success depends on strong processes and capable teams who can leverage these tools effectively. She is also deeply committed to sustainability and circularity, with a personal passion for resale and thrifting. Inspired by her sister's sustainable resale business, The Thrifter Chicks, Maria values the individuality, stories, and environmental responsibility that resale brings, connecting her personal interests with her professional focus on helping brands operate more responsibly.

Guided by the values of connection, integrity, and empowerment, Maria approaches both her professional and personal life with intention. She is passionate about creating momentum for others—helping brands evolve, supporting teams to grow, and mentoring women to step confidently into leadership roles. While mentoring in retail has been central to her work, she also champions women's empowerment across all industries and life stages. For Maria, true success lies in creating lasting impact and showing up with purpose in everything she does.

As she embarks on this new journey with Forth & Forward Advisory, Maria Carlton remains committed to creating lasting impact in business and community. Whether through consulting, mentorship, or speaking engagements, she aims to inspire others to embrace change, foster collaboration, and strive for excellence.

Learn More about Maria Carlton:

Through her Influential Women profile, <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/maria-carlton>

Influential Women

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