

An open letter to all women from Victoria's Secret.

Dear women,

We owe you an apology.

No excuses.

No sweeping our mistakes under the rug or ignoring them altogether.

We are breaking our toxic communication patterns. ‘

We recognize that the history of the Victoria's Secret brand is problematic – that the messages we sent throughout the past four decades contributed to a toxic view of women, body shaming, eating disorder culture, sexism, transphobia, racism, and misogyny.

It is a legacy we can't erase.

That's why Victoria's Secret has sent itself to “rehab”. We've taken a hard look at ourselves and are here to admit our wrongs as we try to make amends to all of you who have been hurt by our actions.

It would be easy to say that the world has changed and we were simply slow to keep up, but as you know, from the very beginning the Victoria's Secret brand was built by a man for men – the problems existed well before the #MeToo movement, before the years promoting our “Angels”, before the over-sexualization of women in our ads, before our former owner's awful connection to Jeffery Epstein, and before our previous Director said those despicable things about plus-sized and trans bodies.

The rot ran deep and for far too long in the Victoria's Secret company you grew up with.

We acknowledge that you've tried to tell us how we were hurting you and we have done a disservice to you by brushing off your feedback or minimizing our culpability in the wider social issues we've negatively impacted. When one of our competitors called out our former Marketing Director for his ugly remarks in a full-page letter just like this one, we acted quickly to remove him from VS but bristled at the critique. We didn't do enough to address the issues back then.

In the intervening years, we've worked hard to bring on a new team to help lead us towards a better version of our company – one that feels more inclusive of bodies, ethnicity, gender, and identity. We believe that the women working in leadership positions here at VS are changing us from the inside out.

Over the past ten months, you may have already noticed some of these changes reflected in our advertising, website, and social media accounts. You may have heard about our new VS Voices podcast amplifying a cross-section of women in leadership or heard about our VS Collective featuring diverse voices like Megan Rapinoe and Priyanka Chopra-Jonas, among others.

But we don't expect a trophy for these significant changes in our business. We have not yet earned a place at the leadership table with our contemporaries and this letter isn't about promoting ourselves, our initiatives, or our new products.

This letter is the apology and acknowledgement of wrongdoing you all deserve, not a step we are begrudgingly taking to quickly move past our mistakes and pivot to selling you comfortable thong

underwear with a clear conscience. We acknowledge that this is only the first step and not one to be brushed past.

We want to thank all of you for not giving up on us and for holding us accountable all these years. It's thanks to you powerful women that the world has come this far. Your tenacity to speak up has finally brought us to this point of reconciliation.

Thank you for teaching us that sexiness has nothing to do with being a "bombshell" and everything to do with how you feel in your skin. We hear you and you are right.

There is nothing fashionable about being late to the women's empowerment party, but we are here showing up in our imperfections.

We now understand that *we* cannot ever empower *you* because no one has the authority to give or take away the power that's already inside you. It's always been yours.

So no, we are not here claiming to empower women, but we are inviting you.

We are not the same company that sold you that great push-up bra back in 2001. Today's Victoria's Secret is so much more than a sexy lingerie company.

We invite you to give us a chance to prove it.

Sincerely,

The Team behind the new Victoria's Secret