

# Lifestyle

## Italian Styling with Swiss Craftsmanship



An Interview with Kari A. Allen,  
President, Versace Timepieces-Gevril Group-USA and Caribbean

**EDITORS' NOTE** In March 2012, Kari Allen was appointed President for Versace Watches and Jewelry in the U.S. and the Caribbean. Prior to this, she was Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Damiani USA; Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Boucheron Joaillerie; and Director of Sales for Gucci Timepieces America. Allen is a graduate of Marymount College and a member of the Women's Jewelry Association.



Kari A. Allen

**COMPANY BRIEF** Gevril ([gevrilgroup.com](http://gevrilgroup.com)) is a Swiss manufacturer of elegant, technologically innovative timepieces. Gevril Group distributes many fine watch brands and is the exclusive distributor for the U.S. and Caribbean for Versace Watches.

### How has the Versace Timepieces brand evolved over the years?

The Versace Watch Collection embodies the intrinsic style of the maison and is characterized by the ambiance of the brand. We take the best of Italian styling and combine it with Swiss craftsmanship and quality to make the very finest timepiece.

This was always Gianni Versace's vision, which is why he chose to have the watches made in Switzerland.

**When a brand is so well-known in the fashion world, how do you convey that this is a quality timepiece as opposed to just an extension of the brand?**

We're definitely a luxury watch brand that offers the finest technology and the latest innovations of the Swiss watch industry, but we have a tie to a maison with design and colors to match fashion trends.

Versace Watches did a wonderful job of bridging the luxury watch category and blending it with the fashion houses of Versace, which are so well-known around the world – it's truly a wonderful lifestyle brand. We are equal in business in men's as we are in ladies, and this is a testament to the excellence and attention to detail, and commitment to the finest quality.

**Are new pieces generally extensions of existing collections or is it broader?**

We have some wonderful styles that we have retrieved from the archives and modernized. But many of the new styles that we just launched are new, innovative, and timely, especially with

the glamour of the Maison Versace, but always with that Swiss-made touch that is synonymous with luxury.

**How has your distribution evolved, and are you happy with the channels you have today?**

When I started with the brand, we were primarily with the Versace boutiques, and we have since joined with wonderful partners, the department stores, specialty stores, and independent jewelers to reach more clients, and we're very happy. The focus for us is to partner strongly with our retailer, who is an am-

bassador for the brand, and to build the Versace watch business within their world.

**How important is your emphasis on the after-sale relationship?**

There is the attention to detail and commitment to the manufacturing of the watches, but there is also the commitment to the client to give them the very best service they would expect from a brand of our stature.

Wherever they purchase their fine timepiece, we have the after-sales service to help them have a wonderful, long life with their timepiece, a very personal vibe – people get very attached to their watches so we cater to that and make the client feel very comfortable with their after-sales service.

**Does this brand appeal to men as much as to women?**

There is a strong business on the gentleman's side. We have a wide range of collections, both for dress and for casual sport.

There is a very big following in the Versace House of the men's category. It's a well-developed lifestyle brand, and you will see that throughout all product categories with Versace. There is a strong following on both the ladies and men's side of the business.

We have wonderful limited editions with custom movements; we have automatics; and we have fun fashion pieces for both men and ladies. In our strategy on the watch side, we ensure that we have wonderful watches that men appreciate.

**How do you define your market? Is it more niche at a specific price point or is it broader than that?**

It's broader. Because we are a lifestyle brand and we have been making watches since 1989, the collections are very well-developed. Today, we work very hard to meet the needs of all types of consumers; we have something for everyone.

**Is it challenging today to differentiate and how do you get the message across about what makes Versace watches special?**

It's a challenge because there are so many brands in the luxury category. However, we are very tied to our maison and we will always intrinsically have the DNA of the House of Versace and the high-quality standards of the Swiss luxury watch industry. We also use the finest materials and have excellent customer service. In addition, we have a special four-year warranty for our watches, which is unique in the Swiss watch industry.

The whole package appeals to consumers so they're comfortable with their purchases because watches are very personal and something they get attached to.

**What excited you about joining the brand? Has the experience been what you expected?**

Absolutely. I love strategizing for the Versace Watch brand in the U.S. and the Caribbean. The brand has so much history and such a wonderful future for the maison. There are many Versace Watch fans out there of all demographics and the fact that we can bring the beauty of Versace to so many with our new retail partners is exciting for me.

**Do you alternate among pieces in terms of what you wear?**

I have my favorites, but as we have new watch introductions, it's always hard to choose what will be my favorite of the season. I do have different watches that go with my different moods.

This is how our consumers are as well – they will choose watches to accessorize their lives based on what they're doing. ●

Versace Urban Gent (upper left); Versace Day Glam womens' watches (upper right); Versace Couture (center)