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# Kevin Raab

*Entrepreneur, Adventurer and Vice President, Lion Button Company*

**M**any designers have set the pace for the world's \$1.4 trillion apparel industry over the years. Giorgio Armani, Pierre Cardin, Coco Chanel, Donna Karan, Ralph Lauren and Gianni Versace, to name but a few. All of their fashions, whether walking the runways of Paris, Milan and New York, standing in Bergdorf's windows, or clothing the world's best-dressed people, share a most common need: fasteners, often a 1,200-year-old technology called a button.

Who the world's designers turn to for their buttons is far from famous, but he takes his business no less seriously than they do theirs: Kevin Raab, vice president of the Lion Button Company, a leading world supplier of buttons, buckles, snaps and tacks, with global headquarters in New York and offices across Asia.

**In fact, Kevin is the only member of the button industry** to regularly attend fashion weeks in the world's fashion capitals as well as in other important venues, such as Amsterdam, Buenos Aires, Madrid, Shanghai, Sidney and Tokyo. These trips help him stay attuned to fashion's dynamic design trends and requirements, which he considers the core of his consultative approach to supplying buttons in hundreds of styles made from scores of materials, natural and synthetic.

Kevin's travels to stay abreast of global fashion are punctuated with visits to such exotic locales as Nepal's Kathmandu Valley, India's Southern Himalayas and the rainforests of Central and South America, where he meets with his artisan suppliers, who hand-craft their buttons from bone, leather, corozo, wood and shells of many kinds. He also schedules time to visit the factories of his other suppliers, who are located across Asia, including Hong Kong, Shanghai and Taiwan.

**With a well-worn passport bearing ink from clearing customs** in more than 30 countries each year, Kevin's annual travel exceeds 250,000 miles. He visits Hong Kong so often each year that its customs office awarded him a frequent resident card many years ago. While seeking the wide range of designer buttons that he provides his clients, he's faced the AK-47s of rebels in Honduras, survived an earthquake in El Salvador and even escaped an aircraft fire in Minnesota. Calling him the "Indiana Jones of Buttons" may be a stretch, but he's enjoyed the adventures almost as much as the hundreds of close friendships he's developed along the way.

**Kevin joined the Lion Button Company** as its founder's first employee in 1986, a year after its start in New York's Fashion District. Since then, he's helped drive its growth to nearly 100 employees and eight-figure annual revenues, while opening offices in 10 countries. When the founder retired several years ago, Kevin arranged the company's buyout financing to continue his career as its top sales representative and industry advocate. He's been a frequent presenter at industry events and has been a guest lecturer at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology. He's also a former board member of the American Apparel Producing Network.

When he's not traveling, Kevin resides in Long Island, N.Y., and stays active in the community through a range of charitable organizations, some of which he's served as a board member. They include Make-A-Wish Foundation, the Dylan Malamala Cystic Fibrosis Foundations, the Woodbury Ball for Autism and the Gift for Dara Autism. ■

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