

## Authentic Brands Buys Majority Interest in Neil Lane

The deal will allow the jewelry designer to expand into all manner of lifestyle products.

By **Jean E. Palmieri**  
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**NEW YORK** — Authentic Brands Group has added another high-profile name to its portfolio: Neil Lane.

ABG, the New York-based brand development firm, has purchased a majority interest in Neil Lane Enterprises, a fine jewelry and accessories company based in Los Angeles that has a large celebrity following and is the jeweler for “The Bachelor” and “Bachelorette” franchises. Under the ABG umbrella, the plan is to expand the Neil Lane label into a full lifestyle brand encompassing home goods, bridal collections and even travel.

Terms were not disclosed, but market sources indicate the deal has an enterprise value of around \$100 million.

“We started looking at the brand in March of 2015,” said Jamie Salter, chairman and chief



Neil Lane is now part of the ABG family.

executive officer of ABG, in an interview at his offices here. But it took this long for him to convince Lane and his largest retail account, Signet Jewelers, which operates more than 3,000 Kay Jewelers, Zales and Jared The Gallery of Jewelry stores, that the deal would

be beneficial to all parties. Lane designs a commercial collection for the Signet stores as well as a couture collection that he sells at his store in West Hollywood and to private clients.

Reached on Thursday, Lane was all in. “So many people have approached me over the years,” he said, “but I was always reluctant.” However, Lane realized that in order to continue growing, he needed a large partner with strong infrastructure so that he could concentrate on providing his “aesthetic and creative,” while ABG handled the back end. “We courted each other for a long time,” he said, “but it’s a great marriage.”

Salter said ABG intends to grow Neil Lane into “a lifestyle and media property on a worldwide basis.” The top categories will include tabletop, home products, bridal — “I can see a Neil Lane registry,” he said — stationery, and even a travel component where the designer offers his take on the “best honeymoon spots” or becomes a red-carpet host talking about jewelry. “He’s a brand builder,” Salter said, adding that Lane will continue to be intimately involved in the company.

Neil Lane represents the first fine-jewelry brand within the ABG family. Other brands that offer jewelry include Judith Leiber, Juicy Couture, Jones New York, Adrienne Vittadini and Frederick’s of Hollywood.

Lane was represented in the deal by Greif & Co., a Los Angeles-based investment bank specializing in mergers and acquisitions for entrepreneurially owned companies. Lloyd Greif, president and ceo of Greif & Co., said Lane “felt distinctly unfulfilled designing

only jewelry. His singular design aesthetic — vintage, glamorous, romantic and classic — could be so much more than just jewelry and clearly fits across manifold product categories. But Neil didn’t have the relationships and expertise that ABG has to take his brand to the next level virtually overnight. There are a number of good brand development, management and licensing companies out there — Iconix, Sequential Brands, Marquee Brands, Saban Lifestyle Brands, Bluestar Alliance, CAA-GBG, to name but a few — but ABG is the *crème de la crème*. They have a track record of growing high-end brands like Judith Leiber and Hickey Freeman. And their consumer product sourcing and retail relationships span the globe. This was a match made in heaven.”

ABG owns or operates more than 27 brands with retail sales of around \$5.5 billion.