Ralph Lauren exec Howard Smith exits over 'personal conduct' allegations

By Jennifer Braun - March 3, 2022

Ralph Lauren Corp. announced on Wednesday the resignation of its executive vice president and chief commercial officer, following an investigation that revealed conduct that violated the company’s code of business and ethics.

Howard Smith has resigned, effective April 2, 2022, and will step down from his role immediately.

The U.S. apparel company said that upon learning of allegations regarding Smith's personal conduct, the audit committee of the board of directors launched an independent investigation with the assistance of outside counsel. The details of the violations in question were not disclosed.
“Because the investigation revealed conduct that violated the company’s code of business conduct and ethics and other policies, the board concluded that Mr. Smith’s resignation was necessary,” chairman Ralph Lauren and chief executive officer Patrice Louvet, said in the statement.

The company added that the “resignation is unrelated to the company’s financial reporting and business performance.”

Smith first joined the company in 2002 and has climbed the corporate ladder over the last 20 years. He led the company’s operations in the Asia-Pacific region from 2015 until 2017. He spent two years as head of its global sales before returning to New York to take on his most recent role.

Regional leaders who already oversee the day-to-day business will now report on an interim basis directly to Louvet.

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