



SOREL Executive Candidacy Brief

Prepared for Sorel Executive Team

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Applying for: Vice President, Global Footwear

Open to contributing at the Product Director level where impact is greatest



The Opportunity

SOREL is not a turnaround. It is a clarity problem with significant growth upside.

The brand has authentic heritage, real product credibility in weather protection, and the backing of Columbia Sportswear's global infrastructure. It has also begun to show signals of cultural and product expansion through collaborations and new product directions. The opportunity now is to organize that momentum into a clear, repeatable product system that can scale across seasons, categories, and markets.

Consumers are not rejecting SOREL. They are reacting to inconsistency. The brand is trusted where it is clear and questioned where it is fragmented.

What SOREL Is Doing Right

Any honest assessment starts with credit. SOREL has several foundational strengths that should be protected and amplified, not reinvented:

Callsign Horizon: A Franchise in Formation

The Callsign Horizon is one of the most strategically important recent launches. It represents a shift from seasonal product toward a potential year-round platform by translating SOREL's weather credibility into a more versatile silhouette. The opportunity now is to evolve this into a true franchise system, not a one-time success, with continuity across seasons, materials, and consumer segments.

Heritage Credibility

The Caribou boot remains one of the most recognized winter silhouettes in the market. This kind of heritage equity is extremely difficult to manufacture. It should remain the brand's gravitational center.

Collaboration Strategy and Cultural Positioning

Recent collaborations signal an intentional move toward broader cultural and fashion relevance. These partnerships are effective as brand amplifiers. The next step is ensuring that this energy translates into core product franchises that can sustain long-term commercial impact.

Women's Category Strength

SOREL's women's business has been the growth engine, and the design and merchandising alignment in that segment is visibly stronger than in men's. The stated priority to also re-engage the male consumer through Caribou-adjacent collections is the right direction.

Columbia Sportswear Infrastructure

Access to Columbia's sourcing, distribution, logistics, and global go-to-market infrastructure provides a competitive advantage that pure-play brands cannot easily replicate.

Where SOREL Can Unlock More Value

The following gaps are assessed from external research, consumer sentiment, competitive positioning, and product line observation. Each area includes a focused path to unlock value.

Identity Clarity:

SOREL currently operates across outdoor utility, fashion footwear, and lifestyle without a consistently unified positioning. Consumers trust the brand in winter but are less certain about its year-round role.

Defining SOREL as a function-first lifestyle brand creates a clear filter for product decisions. Every product should deliver both weather or condition credibility and everyday relevance, with alignment across design, merchandising, and marketing.

Franchise Ownership:

Beyond the Caribou and the emerging Callsign Horizon, SOREL lacks enduring product franchises that persist and compound across seasons. Too much seasonal reset, not enough platform building.

Build 2 to 3 global franchise product families anchored in weather utility. Assign long-term ownership teams per franchise. Extend franchise DNA across categories: boot to sneaker to sandal. Callsign Horizon should be the template, not the exception.

Men's Product Parity:

Over the last decade, SOREL shifted heavily toward women's fashion footwear. The men's assortment often feels less differentiated and less developed. There is a clear opportunity to re-engage the male consumer through product that builds from SOREL's heritage credibility.

Use the Caribou heritage as the entry point for men's re-engagement. Build men's franchise platforms with the same design rigor applied to women's. Ensure the Callsign Horizon and future Caribou extensions offer genuine gender parity in design investment and storytelling.

Design Language Consistency:

There is no clearly codified visual system that unifies product across categories. Without it, the line feels like a collection of products rather than a brand family.

Codify a SOREL design language system: signature sole expression, material blocking rules, proportional DNA, and hardware treatment standards that scale across boots, sneakers, and sandals. If the logo is removed, the product should still read as SOREL.

Line Architecture Discipline:

Product assortment appears broad but lacks clear hierarchy. Silhouette proliferation without defined tiers (core, seasonal, innovation, capsule) creates consumer confusion and merchandising inefficiency.

Implement a structured line architecture with clear product tiers and defined roles. Assign SKU targets and price ladders per tier. Align merchandising to architecture rather than seasonal drops.

Product Storytelling Depth:

Innovation and material capability exist but are under-communicated to consumers. Advanced materials, traction systems, and weather protection constructions are strong features that deserve stronger consumer-facing narratives.

Build storytelling into the product creation process at the brief stage, not as a post-launch afterthought. Every product should carry a defined narrative: what it solves, who it serves, and how it connects to the brand.

Seasonal Dependency:

Winter dominates perception and likely revenue. Spring and Summer categories lack equal authority and identity, creating revenue volatility tied to weather patterns.

Develop warm-weather franchise platforms with the same identity strength as winter. Leverage waterproof DNA and durability credibility in non-winter contexts: rain, urban commuting, travel, and transitional weather.

Digital Engagement Gap:

The current e-commerce experience supports transactions but does not deeply educate or retain consumers. No owned mobile app ecosystem. Product storytelling online is shallow relative to opportunity.

Explore a phased app or enriched digital experience: product storytelling modules, climate-based recommendations, franchise engagement features, and retail integration. Build a persistent relationship with the consumer beyond point of purchase.

Consumer Sentiment:

Fit and Durability: Online community feedback reveals recurring concerns about sizing inconsistency between models, heel slip, and a perceived decline in construction quality compared to earlier product generations.

Standardize fit consistency as a brief-level requirement. Address durability perception through product improvements and transparent storytelling about materials and construction. Improve post-purchase customer service to reduce friction.

Consumer Voice: What the Market Is Saying

Research across product reviews, forums, and community channels reveals a clear pattern:

What Consumers Respect

- Winter performance, warmth, and waterproofing remain deeply trusted
- The Caribou boot is viewed as an enduring classic with genuine heritage credibility
- The blend of style and function, particularly in women's product, is valued
- Early consumer reception to the Callsign Horizon is positive, particularly around comfort and versatility

Where Consumers Push Back

- Sizing inconsistency between models creates purchase hesitation, especially online

- Perceived quality decline: newer products seen as less durable than earlier generations
- Customer service friction around returns and communication gaps
- Uncertainty about what SOREL stands for outside of winter

Key Insight:

Consumers are responding positively where SOREL is clear and consistent, and pushing back where the product and brand feel fragmented.

Competitive Landscape

SOREL competes across several fragmented spaces simultaneously, which creates both opportunity and risk:

SOREL operates across outdoor, lifestyle, and fashion footwear categories, competing with brands that typically dominate one of those spaces. The opportunity is to more clearly own the intersection of weather-ready performance and style-forward design, a position that remains under-defined in the market and where SOREL has credible right to win.

Why Rocky Parrish Fits This Moment

SOREL's current challenge is not a lack of product capability. It is a need for sharper systemization, clearer franchise thinking, and leadership that can connect product, brand, story, and business into a cohesive engine. That is where my background becomes directly relevant.

The Founder Advantage

At ROCKDEEP, I built a footwear and apparel brand from concept through four retail locations across the DC, Maryland, and Virginia market. There was no inherited infrastructure, no established consumer base, and no supporting cast of specialized departments. Every product decision was also a business decision. Every brief had to earn its shelf space. Every story had to find its audience.

That experience creates a fundamentally different kind of executive judgment than what a traditional corporate-track leader develops. It builds sharper sensitivity to where product and business disconnect, stronger instinct for what consumers actually understand and value, and greater comfort building systems where they do not yet exist.

Why That Matters for SOREL Specifically

SOREL does not appear to need incremental product improvement. It appears to need stronger systemization across franchise architecture, design language, and product storytelling. This requires leadership that can connect product, brand, and consumer into a cohesive and repeatable engine.

Where I Can Add Immediate Value

- **Franchise Architecture:** Formalize the Callsign Horizon as a repeatable franchise system and identify 1 to 2 additional franchise platforms that can anchor year-round relevance.
- **Design Language Codification:** Define the visual and material DNA that makes SOREL recognizable across categories, from boot to sneaker to sandal.
- **Men's Re-engagement:** Build men's product with the same design conviction and storytelling rigor as women's, using Caribou heritage as the credibility bridge.
- **Line Architecture Discipline:** Clarify product tiers, reduce assortment redundancy, and ensure every SKU has a defined role in the line.
- **Product Storytelling Engine:** Embed storytelling into the product creation process at brief stage. Every product should carry a defined consumer narrative before development begins.
- **Year-Round Authority:** Build spring and summer franchise platforms that carry the same identity conviction as winter, reducing seasonal revenue volatility.

Closing

I approach product leadership with full ownership of the outcome, not just the function.

SOREL does not appear to need maintenance. It appears to need definition. The brand has the equity, infrastructure, and momentum. The opportunity is to organize those assets into a product system that delivers consistent, franchise-led growth across seasons, categories, and markets.

That is the work I have spent my career doing.

I welcome the conversation.

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