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DEBRA OCONNELL NAMED PRESIDENT, NEWS GROUP AND NETWORKS

Newly Formed Business Unit Aligns ABC News, ABC Owned Television Stations and Networks Business Operations Under Veteran Executive



Disney Entertainment*

Debra O'Connell has been elevated to the new role of president, News Group and Networks, Disney Entertainment, it was announced today by Dana Walden, co-chairman, Disney Entertainment, to whom O'Connell will continue to report.

Kim Godwin, president, ABC News, will join Chad Matthews, president, ABC Owned Television Stations, in reporting to O'Connell, aligning the nation's No. 1 news network with the No. 1 station group in the country – connecting an array of powerhouse shows and brands that range from the top-rated evening news program, “World News Tonight with David Muir,” and top-rated morning news program, “Good Morning America,” to ABC7/WABC-TV New York, the most-watched station in the United States.

“Debra is an excellent executive who has succeeded in a wide range of leadership roles around our company and knows very well the extraordinary power of ABC News and its world-class journalists,” said Walden. “This new role gives her oversight across all our linear operations, where she will be

able to optimize our iconic brands and shepherd them into the future. I look forward to having her lead these incredibly talented teams as we build on our success.”

The newly formed News Group and Networks unit places key businesses and operations in a single vertical under OConnell to better enable synergy and collaboration. The alignment marks an expansion of duties for OConnell, a 27-year veteran of The Walt Disney Company who most recently served as president, Networks and Television Business Operations for DET.

“I consider it a privilege to advocate for the best networks, the best news organization and the best stations in the world, and thank Dana for her leadership and trust,” said OConnell. “I’m excited to work with Kim, Chad and these exceptional teams on strategies to superserve our viewers for years to come.”

In her new role, OConnell adds ABC News to a purview that includes the ABC Owned Television Stations and P&L responsibilities across the company’s multiplatform linear entertainment networks, including ABC broadcast network, Disney Channels, FX Networks, Freeform and National Geographic Channels. ABC News is home to the No. 1 evening news program with “World News Tonight,” the No. 1 morning news program with “Good Morning America,” the No. 1 network program in daytime with “The View” and Friday’s No. 1 newsmagazine with “20/20.” Disney Entertainment’s eight owned TV stations are multiplatform leaders in local news and information, reaching 23% of households and more than 34 million total viewers and 62 million digital visitors each month. In addition to WABC-TV New York, the station group includes KABC-TV Los Angeles, WLS-TV Chicago, WPVI-TV Philadelphia, KGO-TV San Francisco, KTRK-TV Houston, WTVD-TV Raleigh-Durham and KFSN-TV Fresno.

Previously, OConnell led WABC-TV New York as president and general manager, where she had overall management responsibility for the station and all of its ancillary businesses as well as “Live with Kelly and Ryan.” Under her leadership, the long-running hit series became the No. 1 syndicated daytime talk show for the first time in franchise history. In her previous executive roles, she served as executive vice president, Sales and Marketing, of Disney | ABC’s consolidated advertising sales group; president, National TV Sales, ABC Owned Television Stations; and vice president of marketing at WABC-TV.

This year, Broadcasting & Cable will induct OConnell into its Hall of Fame, Class of 2024. Previously, they awarded her Broadcaster of the Year in 2022. Additionally, she was honored with a 2022 Gracie Leadership Award from the Alliance of Women in Media.

OConnell is on the board of directors for A&E Networks, National Geographic Partners and TVB, a not-for-profit trade association representing America’s local broadcast television industry. She also

serves on advisory boards for the Ryan Seacrest Foundation and League of Women Voters of New York City.

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