

CHANGEMAKERS



MIKE ALLEN

Co-founder, Axios

Every morning shortly after 4 a.m., Mike Allen rises and gets to work creating the daily Axios AM and PM newsletters he sends to help Beltway readers make sense of the day's news. Allen first made the newsletter indispensable at Politico, where he helped amp up the pace of political coverage with its fast-paced Playbook digest. More than 3,300 editions of Playbook later, he left to co-found Axios in 2016 with fellow Politico expat Jim VandeHei, applying the Playbook model to business, tech and media. Allen and VandeHei rejected the worst of journalistic practices, like chasing scale with clickbait. Axios' newsletters epitomize that approach; they're punchy, tightly written digests, punctuated with signature headings like "Why it matters" and "Be smart." -- *Lucia Moses*

ADAM HANSMANN AND ALEX MATHER

Co-founders, The Athletic

There's a truism that the sports page pays for the front page at a newspaper. Alex Mather and Adam Hansmann, the founders of The Athletic, figured they could make good money if they didn't bother with the front page part. Since its launch in 2016, the subscription site has amassed 100,000 paying customers, each paying about \$50 per year, as well as a boatload of venture capital funding, raising about \$30 million to date. The company has also been on a hiring spree, scooping up headline sports journalists including Ken Rosenthal and Richard Deitsch. Those hires help The Athletic draw in casual fans, but the die-hards who care a lot about their teams are the secret sauce. "Our model works in any market," Mather says. -- *Max Willens*



OMAR RAJA

Founder, House of Highlights

Omar Raja doesn't watch NBA games like most fans do. He's not focusing on where the ball is -- he's focusing on the fans. Lately, he's noticing players and fans doing funny things in sync, like running in the same direction. If it's something he'd want to watch repeatedly and share with friends, it'll become a House of Highlights post, with one of Raja's emoji-accented quips.

If it's just highlights they want, sports fans have lots of places to go. But it's the 23-year-old Raja's unique way of looking at the game on and off the court that's made House of Highlights into an Instagram sensation. One recent video post made rapper and fervent sports fan Drake a player in an "NBA 2K" game; it's gotten nearly half a million likes and almost 10,000 comments. If anyone has shown it's possible to build an actual media brand on social media, it's Raja.

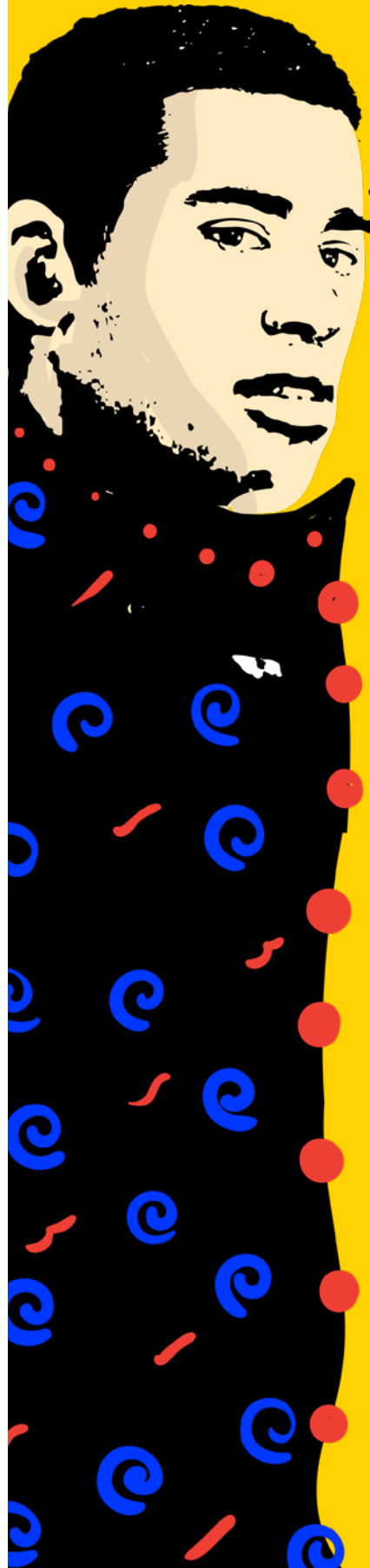
Raja started House of Highlights almost by accident four years ago as a student at the University of Central Florida while driving around with friends one day. Turner noticed the account's growth and bought it, and Raja had a job by graduation. Now part of Turner's Bleacher Report, the account has grown to 9 million followers, and its posts regularly get 1 million-plus views and thousands of comments. The account is followed by the likes of LeBron James and Drake, and it's known for sparking conversations in the comments section; big-name athletes have been known to appear there.

"They're private conversations, and they're happening on House of Highlights," says Nyerr Parham, director of strategy for House of Highlights. "It's a testament to the sense of community it's built."

House of Highlights isn't just a cultural touchstone -- it's becoming a real business in its own right. Advertisers such as Netflix and Jordan Brand have paid to piggyback on the account's strong connection with its 12- to 24-year-old fans. Seeing the opportunity, Bleacher Report has added staff and is looking to grow it beyond Instagram and the NBA. Soccer is the next logical step, with its NBA-like players who are big personalities and rabid fans. Raja, an avowed NBA fan, has begun immersing himself in soccer and its fans. "I want the feeling they're having because I don't want to fake it," he says.

Raja is still the name and face of the account, and spends his workdays combing through the 500 or so messages the account gets each day, looking for fodder for the 12 or 13 posts he publishes on a daily basis. Other times, he's weighing in on branded content proposals to make sure they fit the House of Highlights sensibility. Since January, colleague Drew Corrigan has joined him in running the account, but Raja still approves virtually every post, if he doesn't create it himself. "This is what I love to do," he says. "Up until [House of Highlights], I had no idea what I was going to do. Every night I go to bed, I think, 'Thank God this worked out.'" Bleacher Report has to hope he never stops thinking that.

-- LM





RYAN BROWN

SVP business development, Gizmodo Media Group

Ryan Brown helped build Gizmodo Media Group's commerce operations into a quarter of the publisher's digital revenue, mostly through deals and discounts, and more recently, expanding into a full-fledged commerce brand called The Inventory. Brown's team maintains a catalog of hundreds of product guides, and it's looking to branch out into an events business and leverage the community in the company's Kinja Deals Facebook group. "Deals can be limiting when you're really passionate about products," Brown says. -- *MW*

BRIAN MADDEN

SVP of development, Hearst Digital Media

After serving for years as its head of audience, Brian Madden now oversees Hearst Digital Media's development, meaning he determines how Hearst's brands can live across the internet. He's assembled a team that creates shows for platforms including Snapchat and Musical.ly; integrates commerce into more of Hearst's digital portfolio; and develops content for new devices, including Google's and Amazon's voice assistants. Madden, who reports directly to Hearst Digital president Troy Young, is ultimately figuring out the future of Hearst's brands. -- *MW*



MIKI KING

VP of marketing, The Washington Post

Building a successful subscription business requires more than just signing up new paying readers; the toughest part is keeping them on board. King joined the Post in 2016 from Politico, where she was part of the team that built Politico Pro, one of the industry's most vaunted subscription businesses, rising to evp of operations. The Post passed the 1 million digital subscriptions mark in 2017 by focusing on acquisition and retention, leading to King's promotion to vp of marketing in January. -- *LM*





ALLISON MURPHY

VP of ad innovation, The New York Times

Today's media companies need to move fast and efficiently by getting previously siloed departments to collaborate. For the Times, that's meant using its reader data and editorial products in the service of advertising while preserving editorial independence. Allison Murphy's appointment is the most official step in this direction. She and her team of 50 are developing new ad formats and leveraging Times journalism for the ad side. One task is leading nytDemo, a new team that adapts data science for the business and news sides. It's produced two tools, Project Feels and Readerscope, to help advertisers do precise ad targeting. With the Times aiming to double digital revenue to \$800 million by 2020, it's looking to products like these to help it stay a step ahead. -- LM

CLAUDIUS SENST

Head of consumer subscriptions, Insider Inc.

Claudius Senst has experience getting customers to pay for something they once got for free. Senst, who serves as Insider Inc.'s first head of consumer subscriptions, came to Insider from its sister site Bild, where he helped launch its first digital paid product, BILDplus. There, he was responsible mostly for working with mobile phone carriers to drive subscriptions. At Insider, where he reports to Business Insider CEO Henry Blodget, Senst helps figure out what to put behind the paywall of BI Prime, which the company says has attracted thousands of subscribers since its launch in November. -- MW



BENJAMIN CLYMER

Founder and CEO, Hodinkee

Publishers are increasingly chasing e-commerce revenue as an alternative to the ever-challenging online ad market.

But some, including wristwatch enthusiast site Hodinkee, are ahead of the curve.

What began as a simple blog became a legitimate media business when luxury watch companies began knocking on Benjamin Clymer's door, asking to purchase ads in 2010. But fast forward eight years, and Hodinkee's founder and chief executive says advertising is now a relatively small part of the company's business. Over 65 percent of Hodinkee's revenue comes from commerce.

"This is a very different media property," Clymer says. "For a long time, we knew our audience was transactional in a way no other luxury publication can compete with."

Initially, Hodinkee dabbled in commerce with its own line of leather watchbands and a storefront selling vintage pieces. But last fall, it became a fully authorized dealer for various high-end brands, including Tag Heuer and Longines, taking on millions of dollars' worth of inventory and selling it directly to its rabid audience of watch aficionados through technology it built in-house.

Building a commerce business is perhaps easier when your average reader earns more than \$200,000 and purchases three \$7,000 watches every year, of course. In 2017, Hodinkee sold over \$2 million worth of limited-edition Vacheron Constantin watches in just 30 minutes.

With the e-commerce business ticking along nicely, Clymer says he's spending much of his time on Hodinkee's new \$27-per-issue print quarterly and mulling plans for the company's first showroom. -- Jack Marshall



JON ROBERTS

Chief innovation officer, Dotdash

For years, it seemed the only way for digital publishers to make money was to cram more ads on their sites.

Dotdash, formerly About.com, challenged that idea. With support from CEO Neil Vogel and CFO Tim Quinn, Roberts, a newcomer to publishing, made the case that it could work. The company took the plunge in 2016 when it relaunched its verticals. One, The Spruce, cut its ads by 30 percent and grew ad revenue by 40 percent in a year. Most publishers pay lip service to user experience; Dotdash actually delivered on it.

-- LM



CHRISTY TANNER

EVP and GM of CBS News Digital, CBS Interactive

Four years ago, if someone told you the 90-year-old broadcast giant that's home to TV news institutions such as "60 Minutes" and "Face the Nation" would be one of the biggest players in over-the-top video streaming, you probably would have called that idea crazy. The thing about crazy ideas, though, is they start sounding pretty smart if they work.

At CBS News, Christy Tanner is responsible for the news organization's most high-profile product: CBSN, a 24-hour news network made for internet-connected screens. It's no small operation -- Tanner oversees a team of as many as 250 people across CBS News Digital and CBS Interactive -- and it's already profitable.

But CBSN's success goes beyond profitability; it's already had a lasting impact on CBS News as well as other divisions inside CBS Corp.

Take, for instance, "CBS Evening News," which Jeff Glor anchors and Mosheh Oinounou executive produces -- both are CBSN alumni. Or there's the fact that whenever a big breaking news story hits, CBS News now has the ability to cover it in-depth without having to worry about cutting into scheduled programming. This, along with producing more original documentaries, has allowed CBS News to not only go deeper in its coverage, but also explore new topics such as the changing nature of gender, says Tanner.

A great deal of CBSN's success can be attributed to a decision 2 1/2 years ago to hold a daily "growth engagement" meeting, which brings together representatives from editorial, product, public relations, marketing, analytics, business development and other departments. The idea: To succeed, everyone needs to understand each other and be on the same page.

"We're able to identify glitches and problems quickly, and we're able to ask questions and find answers," says Tanner. "That's been a real key to creating a collaborative culture at CBS News Digital."

Soon, this will extend to how CBS News' digital and broadcast divisions operate.

"We are talking right now about how we can get even further in with broadcast, and create a central newsgathering and breaking news operation," says Tanner. "But it's an evolution. Some processes you can change overnight; others, you have to develop new muscles and ways of thinking."

As a further testament to how much CBS Corp. values CBSN, the ad-supported, free network is now the model by which other CBS Corp. divisions are moving forward with their own streaming products. CBS Sports HQ, which launched this spring, is following CBSN's playbook; an "Entertainment Tonight"-themed streaming channel set to launch later this year will do the same.



"It's not a platitude to say that our culture has driven the successful launches of multiple streaming products," says Tanner. "Our teams talk and get into the nitty-gritty because we're all in the same bunker now." -- Sahil Patel

MAGGIE SUNIEWICK

President, NBCUniversal Digital Enterprises

For a company that made \$33 billion in 2017 thanks to a robust broadcast and cable network TV business -- not to mention movie studios and theme parks -- NBCUniversal has aggressively invested in digital media over the past couple of years. A total of \$900 million has gone toward stakes in Snap, BuzzFeed and Vox Media, as NBCU explores how to find and entertain younger audiences that aren't watching prime-time TV like previous generations did.

Maggie Suniewick, head of NBCU's Digital Enterprises group, oversees these investments as well as other digital content, distribution and revenue partnerships across NBCU's portfolio.

It's a big initiative for NBCU, says Suniewick. "We've been making great progress on digital, but because the revenue is smaller [on digital] than our core business, it was not necessarily the core focus of various groups across the company," she says. "For my group, it's the core focus."

Suniewick's team has groomed partnerships for NBCU, including Snapchat Discover shows and a partnership with BuzzFeed to produce Olympics content. The group also formed the NBCU Digital Content Lab, which develops original shows as well as extensions of existing TV shows for Snap and other digital and social platforms.

"We could have created 20 different teams, but instead went the route of putting a group of people together who can scale the development of content across the portfolio," says Suniewick. "A year in, we now have a portfolio of hit shows on Snap."

Suniewick's goal is to market NBCU's intellectual property by extending it to new platforms and audiences, but business objectives also tie to these efforts. E!'s Snapchat show "The Rundown" has made more than a million dollars; NBCU's Olympics content for Snapchat brought in tens of millions, NBCU previously said.

"There's certainly a marketing aspect to what we do, but there's a business element, too," Suniewick says. "We are absolutely turning these things into businesses on their own."

-- Sahil Patel



SHARON CHAN

VP of innovation, product and development,
The Seattle Times

At The Seattle Times, Sharon Chan spearheads efforts to get the newsroom invested in driving subscriptions. A leaderboard that shows which stories are driving the most subscriptions is available to all the reporters, and editors regularly meet with product teams to figure out how they can grow consumer revenue. "Newsrooms have seen what is happening with the business," Chan says. "There's a business realization that we need to play a role in saving it." -- MW



ANNA ARVIDSSON

Head of brand studio, Bonnier News

Historically, the divide between editorial and commercial departments in newsrooms has been tough to scale.

Since October 2017, Anna Arvidsson has led collaboration between Swedish publisher Bonnier Group's content studio and its popular news brand Expressen. By having content studio staffers attend news meetings and giving them access to audience data, a growing number of brands have run real-time native ad campaigns across Expressen relating to the news cycle. As with most things, success comes down to communication. "We have to talk the right language and be more like a partner [to the news desk]," says Arvidsson, who has hired ex-journalists for the content studio to improve workflows. As a result, 12 percent of Bonnier News' digital revenue comes from native, up from 10 percent last year. --

Lucinda Southern



CAROLYN KYLSTRA

Editor-in-chief, Self

The Condé Nast fitness magazine could have been all but forgotten after it folded in print in December 2016.

Instead, it's had a revival as a channel in Snapchat's Discover section, finding new (and younger) audiences under Kylstra. That wasn't a foregone conclusion: Self was better known to women in their 30s than Snapchat's teen and college-age audience. Kylstra and her team translated Self's editorial mission for Snapchat (less parenting advice and more makeup tips, for example). Self launched in May 2017 on Discover and reaches 8 million unique users a month on Snapchat, more than it does on its own site, with more than half that audience returning to the channel at least three times a week, which is high in Snapchat terms. -- LM

ADAM MOSSERI

VP of product management, Facebook

For the past year, Facebook has wreaked havoc on publishers' audience strategies (and blood pressures) with various tweaks to its news feed algorithm. Those changes were made largely to attempt to reignite interaction between users on the platform, and they inevitably meant a reduction in the volume of short-form video and click-friendly posts that would appear in users' feeds.

But through the changes -- some of which have already had major repercussions for smaller publishers -- Facebook's Adam Mosseri emerged as a something of an ally to media companies. Many appreciated his willingness to explain Facebook's moves and thought processes in interviews and on public platforms such as Twitter, feeling that the approach was somewhat refreshing given Facebook's penchant for opacity.

"[Mosseri is] the only Facebook exec anybody can stand talking to because he seems not to lie all the time," one publishing exec told Digiday in January.

Mosseri, 35, has spent 10 years at Facebook, serving as product vp for the past two and overseeing the various teams responsible for Facebook's news feed. But after a recent executive shake-up at Facebook, Mosseri will begin a new role as vp of product for Instagram this summer.

For many publishers, that leaves two major questions. First, will Mosseri's attitude and candor with publishers extend to his work at Instagram, and what will that mean for publishers looking to make the most of Facebook's sister platform?

But second, who will take over news feed responsibilities in Mosseri's place? After a turbulent few months of algorithm changes, many publishers hope things will quiet down so they can concentrate on recalibrating their audience strategies and, in some cases, business models. But one way or another, they'll hope whoever replaces Mosseri will follow his lead when it comes to transparency and availability.

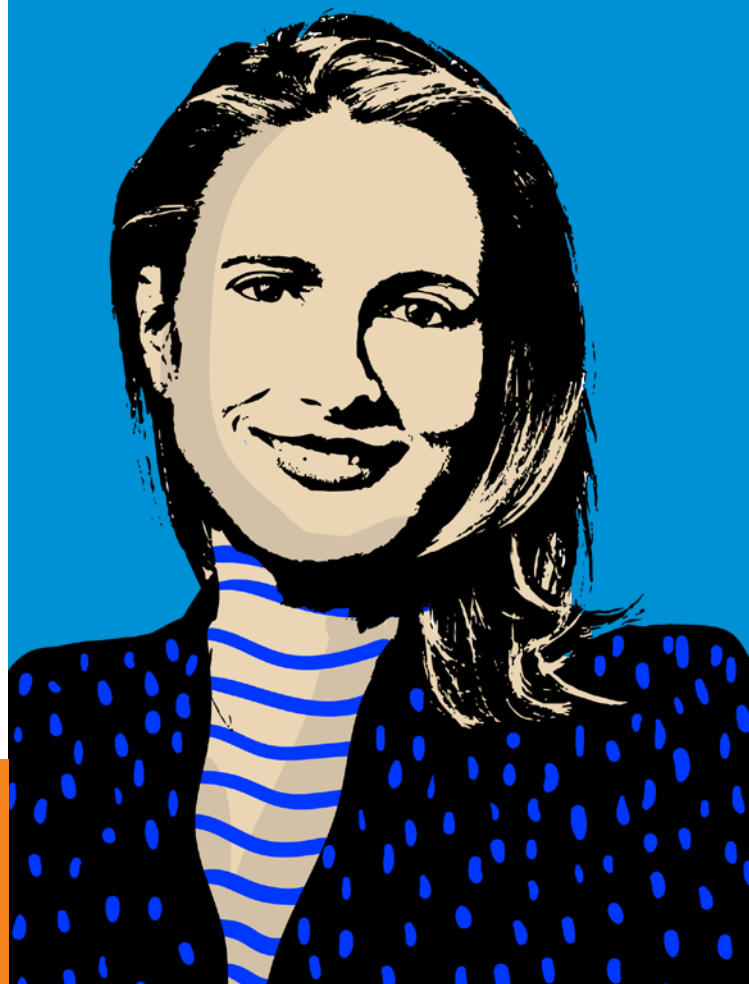
-- Jack Marshall



LAUREN KERN

Editor-in-chief, Apple News

Last year marked a tipping point for Apple News becoming a real business for the iPhone maker, publishers say. Apple's hiring of Lauren Kern as the news app's editor-in-chief last summer is a major reason why. The former executive editor of New York magazine and deputy editor of The New York Times Magazine, Kern confers clout on Apple News. She's edited pull-no-punches stories by journalists such as Gabriel Sherman and Rebecca Traister. That hard-news background makes publishers more willing to trust the feedback from Kern and her team about what articles, and more recently, videos, they seek. That trust matters even more when contrasted with a platform like Facebook, which has been less than reliable in its commitment to publishers. -- *Tim Peterson*



MIKE MCCUE

CEO, Flipboard

Flipboard could have folded, like all the other news apps that launched riding the iPad's coattails. But it didn't. Now, Mike McCue's company has met its moment. While Facebook has reduced the reach of news on its platform, Flipboard has spent the past year removing barriers for publishers to reach its claimed audience of 100 million monthly users, enabling sites to syndicate their RSS feeds into its app and supporting non-native article formats. That work helped Flipboard overtake Google News to become publishers' fourth-largest referral source, per Parse.ly. More recently, McCue has turned his attention to boosting Flipboard's -- and publishers' -- business, hiring a head of sales and recruiting Spotify, Google and AOL vet Kal Amin to be chief operating officer. -- *TP*

TILL FAIDA

CEO, Eyeo

As CEO of the company behind popular online ad-blocking software Adblock Plus, Till Faida isn't particularly popular with many in the media and advertising world. Randall Rothenberg, CEO of the Interactive Advertising Bureau, once labeled Adblock Plus as an "old-fashioned extortion racket" and said ad-blocking firms are "pissants" run by people with "silly titles and funny walks."

But whether or not they agree with his tactics and business model, publishers and online ad companies can't deny the impact Faida's company, Eyeo, has had on the online ad ecosystem in recent years. And the name-calling doesn't bother Faida one bit -- with Adblock Plus' 150 million monthly users, he holds a lot of cards.

"We still have a lot of publishers that don't want to be part of the dialogue and would rather take us to court," he says. "But on the other hand, more and more publishers in general now choose to work with us instead. The initial controversy has dialed down."

The controversy Faida alludes to is largely around Eyeo and Adblock Plus' revenue model, which involves letting some companies' "acceptable ads" pass through its blocker by default in exchange for payment. Eyeo customers have included Google, Microsoft, Taboola and others.

While some liken that strategy to extortion or "highway robbery," Faida argues Adblock Plus simply solves a problem for consumers, one that publishers and online advertising companies have created by ignoring mounting quality problems in online advertising for years.

Demand for such tools also appears to be growing as consumers become more wary of online tracking and data collection. That's evidenced by recent moves by Google and other browser manufacturers to introduce ad-filtering tools to their products, Faida says.

"To some extent, I'd say they're copying our playbook to figure out what is a healthy balance between the interest of consumers and the legitimate interest of publishers to protect themselves," he says. -- *Jack Marshall*



RAHUL ROY- CHOWDHURY

VP of product management,
Google Chrome and Chrome OS

Panic ensued for some publishers last year when it emerged that Google would introduce an ad “filter” to its popular Chrome browser. Some of publishers’ most lucrative -- yet irritating -- ad formats would now be blocked by default, Google said, in an attempt to improve the web experience for Chrome users.

There’s irony in a company generating billions in online ad revenue every month getting into the ad-blocking game. Some argued the feature was a defensive one designed to quell the adoption of the third-party ad blockers that threaten to limit Google’s ad business. Others considered it a strategic move designed to afford Google yet more control over the online ad market and the web more generally.

But Rahul Roy-Chowdhury, vp of product management for Google Chrome, says his team concerns itself with one thing when developing products: user experience.

“We have a relentless focus on the user, and everything else flows from that,” he says. “When we have reason to believe the user is not having a good experience, we see it as our role to intervene.”

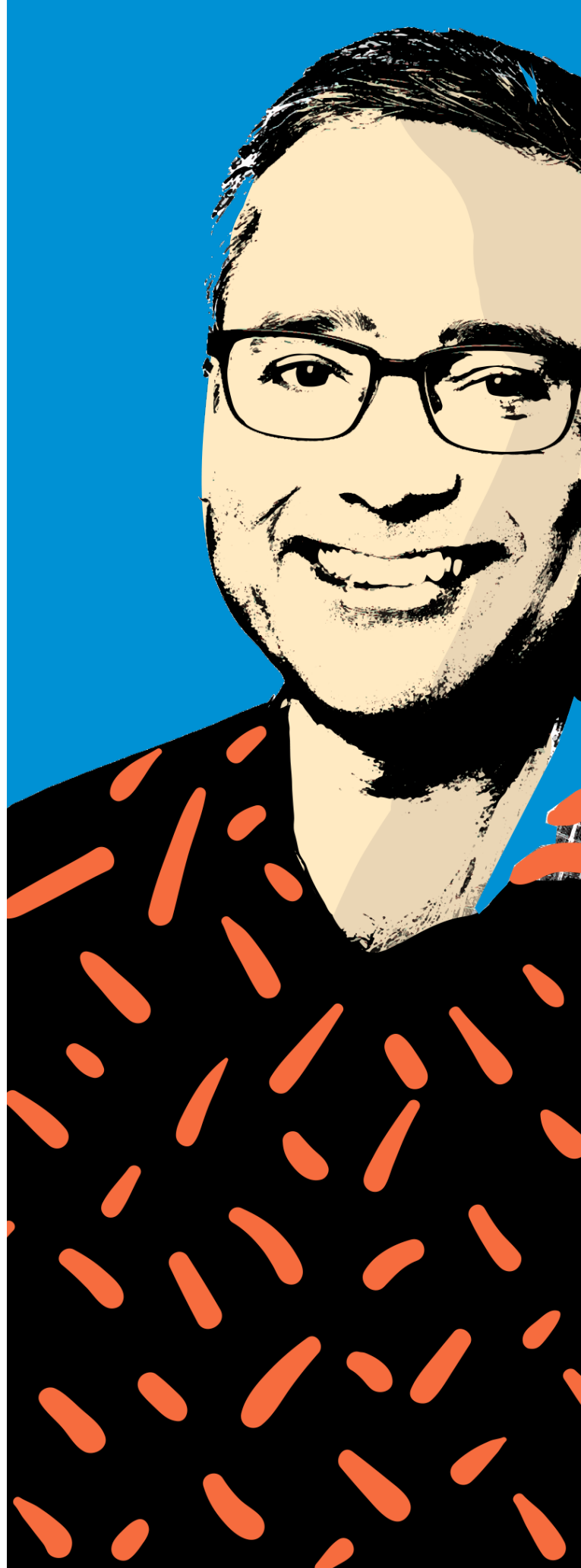
That ethos resulted in Chrome pinpointing 12 of the most intrusive and annoying ad formats across the web -- as identified by the Coalition for Better Ads -- and blocking all ads from appearing on sites that employ them beginning last February.

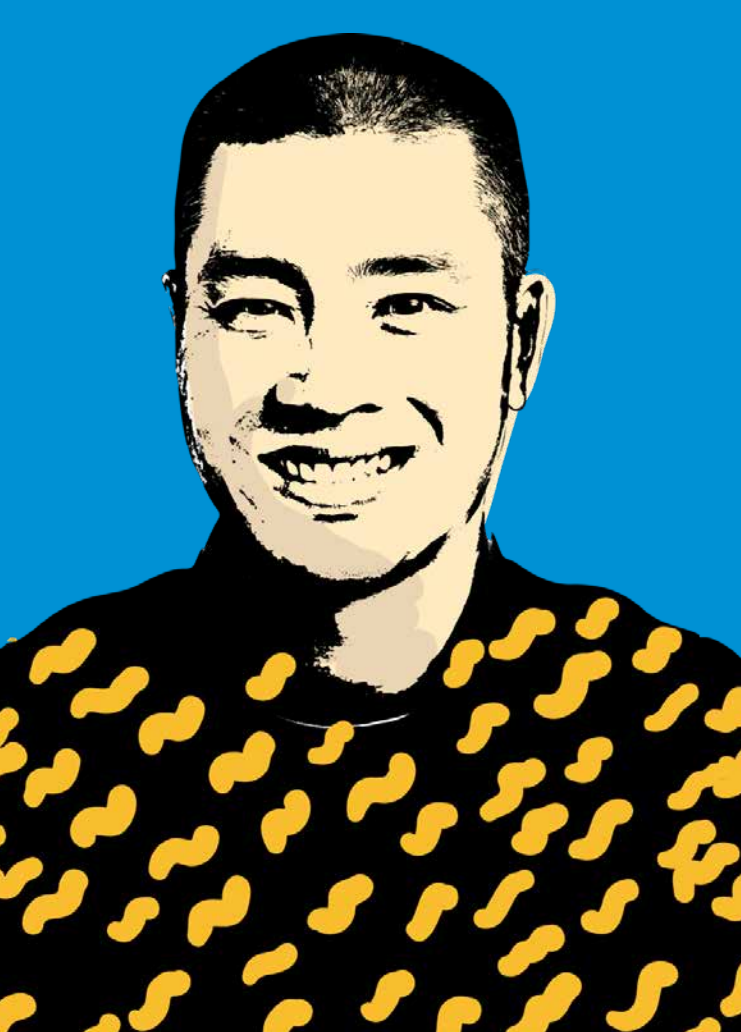
The Chrome team stopped short of blocking all ads, however. That decision had less to do with Google than it did with protecting the business models that help power the web, Roy-Chowdhury says.

“It’s easy to be draconian and to say we will just not show ads, and some people have adopted that solution,” he says. “On the Chrome team, our approach has been to recognize that ad-supported business models are prevalent on web and that many are trying to do the right thing. It’s about punishing those trying to abuse the system.”

The filter has also affected Google’s own ads -- and other Chrome features -- which has led to conversations with those in other parts of the company hoping to understand how their own products and technologies might be affected. The YouTube team, for example, has had questions about recent plans to limit audio for autoplay videos in Chrome.

“There’s a constant dialogue that goes on where we publicly announce things, and people in the company are affected by them, and come and ask for more information,” Roy-Chowdhury says. “Typically, we treat first-party service providers the way we treat entire ecosystem. ... Google doesn’t get a pass.” -- *Jack Marshall*





RICHARD AU

Director, Amazon Channels U.S.

Going “direct to consumer” has become a hot new phrase for many TV networks that dream of subscription dollars, especially as they see legacy revenue from linear TV continue to decline. But building an app is one thing -- getting people to pay for the app is a whole different matter. This is where Richard Au, head of the Amazon Channels program in the U.S., comes in. Au’s role is to get TV companies -- and digital publishers -- to launch their streaming apps through Amazon, providing back-end support and entrance into the coveted Amazon Prime ecosystem in return. How successful has it been? Networks on the program have said Amazon Channels can account for as much as half of their app subscribers. That’s a ton of dough. -- *Sahil Patel*

JULIE DETRAGLIA

Head of research, Hulu

Hulu occupies a unique role among the streaming giants: It has both advertising and subscriptions baked into its business model -- and it’s a major tech platform owned by legacy media giants. In big media’s war against tech, this makes Hulu vital. As head of research at Hulu, Julie DeTraglia oversees a team of 35 people, who have the job of researching consumer trends that help formulate how Hulu acquires new subscribers as well as getting existing subscribers to spend more time on its streaming service. With 20 million subscribers in the U.S., Hulu still has plenty of room to grow, and DeTraglia and her team will shape the company’s approach. -- *Sahil Patel*





SETH DALLAIRE

VP of global ad sales, Amazon Media Group

With the rate at which Amazon's ad business is growing, it's hard to believe that two years ago, Amazon was still explaining why it had an advertising business. Today, it's even giving the duopoly a run for its money. In its first-quarter earnings of 2018, Amazon saw its advertising revenue bring in \$2 billion, a 132 percent growth year over year. The man responsible is Seth Dallaire, vp of global ad sales at Amazon Media Group, whose sole focus is cultivating the e-commerce giant's ad business, working with brands and agencies to understand how they can take advantage of the platform's data and search capabilities. The ultimate challenge will be to ensure Amazon lives up to Citi analysts' prediction that its ad sales revenue will reach \$50.6 billion by 2028. -- Ilyse Liffreing

DANNY SPEARS

Programmatic director, Guardian News and Media

The Guardian has taken a tough line on ad tech, stamping out hidden vendor fees and tightening up a digital ad supply chain that had become bloated with ad tech middlemen. Danny Spears has played an integral role in the changes, openly campaigning for every business within the digital ad supply chain to take accountability for its own part in the proliferation of ad fraud. He has also steered the transformation of the publisher's programmatic setup to ensure it has more control over digital ad transactions. Spears helped create a system in which the Guardian has the control over decision-making and its media, data and transactions via the technology it uses and the partners it picks. As a result, the Guardian has had triple-digit programmatic ad growth in the last three years.

-- Jessica Davies





ALEXIS MARCOMBE

Managing director, Le Figaro

Le Figaro took a cleaver to its ad tech supply chain this year, unplugging every vendor to regain control over its programmatic revenue. The result: The French daily newspaper saw video ad revenue jump 50 percent. Marcombe played an integral role in that decision. He also launched Le Figaro's audience insights and activation service for advertisers, which involves mining the publisher's database of 28 million logged-in readers and 300 million cookies to better target ads. -- JD

STEFAN BETZOLD

Managing director of digital, Bild

It's not easy to make demands of the Facebook-Google duopoly, but Stefan Betzold has played the long game.

He helped convince Facebook to release features that would help publishers better monetize Instant Articles with subscriptions and ads, and he has been equally vocal about how the combined strength of publishers can compete against the duopoly. He founded the International Paid Content Summit and Distributed Content Summit for publishers from five countries to collaborate and share ideas on how to reduce platform dependency. -- JD

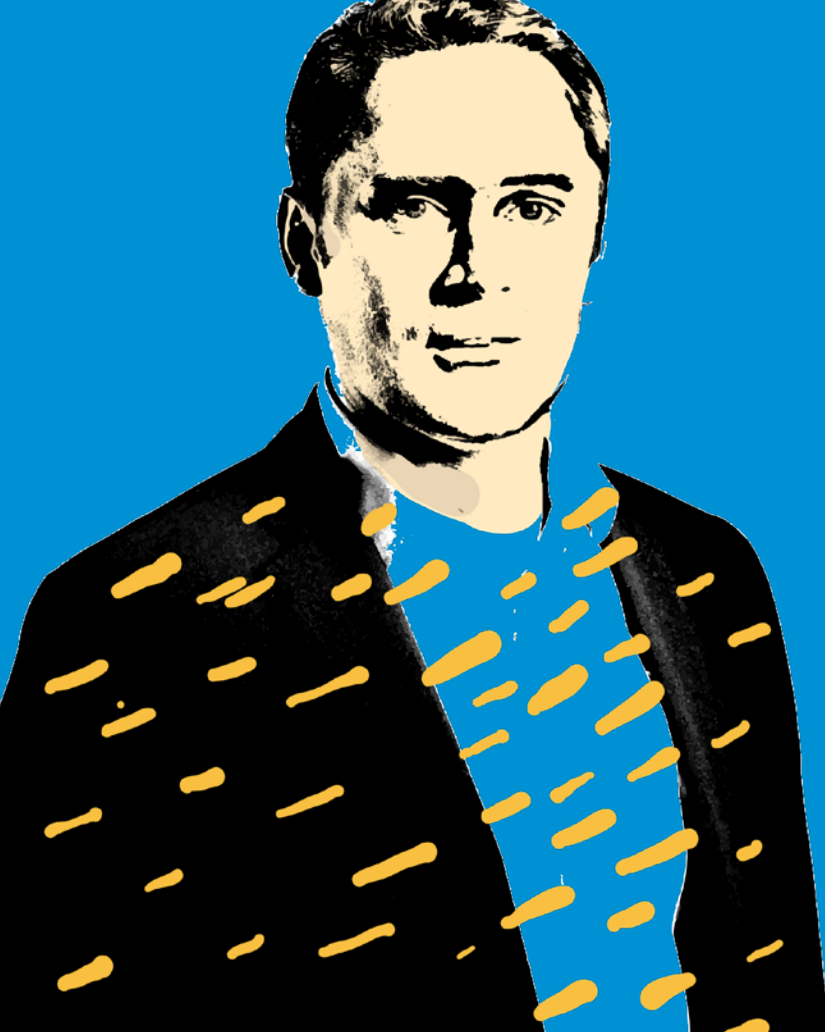


HELJE SOLBERG

CEO, VGTV

According to Helje Solberg, the key to keeping Verdens Gang, Norway's largest online news site, in its No. 1 position is figuring out video. The site established a separate company in 2013, VGTV, to focus solely on digital video, which in time will merge back into the legacy publisher. "Focus is essential to establish a learning culture and adjust to change," says Solberg, who has led the charge in driving experimentation with video across breaking news, entertainment and documentaries. -- LS





ROBERT BRIDGE

Chief customer officer, The Telegraph

Contrary to the belief that young people don't pay for news, the fastest-growing age group for The Telegraph's Premium subscription is 18-34, at 20 percent of overall subscribers. To keep members coming in, Robert Bridge and his team collect data to figure out where the news brand's 200 daily articles -- distributed online and in two apps, Snapchat and Apple News -- fit into the customer journey. Growth appears healthy: In the last year, retention and acquisition rates for subscriptions have had double-digit growth. This is partly due to the cross-functional customer team Bridge recruited, incorporating people from marketing, communications, insights and analytics, design, and subscriptions. "From data scientists to designers, there's a full spectrum of left- to right-brain thinking inclusive of everything in between," he says. -- LS

JONATHAN LEWIS

Head of digital and partnership innovation,
Channel 4

It's no longer just publishers searching for ways to rival the Facebook-Google duopoly -- broadcasters are joining the fight. Channel 4 has led the way in the U.K., thanks to Jonathan Lewis. Lewis led the implementation of C4's joint venture with Germany's ProSieben, France's TF1 and Italy's Mediaset, creating the first pan-European broadcaster exchange. Its sole remit: combating the duopoly. Lewis also exploited a gap in the broadcaster video-on-demand market to develop a premium digital video-on-demand sales house, in order to compete with the digital giants. He injected £35 million (\$47 million) in revenue into C4 within two years of setting up the U.K.'s first programmatic broadcaster video exchange. Since he joined C4 three years ago, digital revenue has become the fastest growth area of the business, rising 300 percent to £100 million (\$134 million) a year. -- JD





DIET MADISON AVENUE

Catalyst of change

Since October, anonymous Instagram account **Diet Madison Avenue** has collected stories about sexual harassment, acting as whistleblower to call out men it says should be fired for abuse. Followed by more than 25,000 people, the account has acted as a voice for women going through experiences similar to those that sparked the #MeToo movement. The platform has not only been a voice in a social media echo chamber -- it has led to change: Droga5's Ted Royer, The Martin Agency's Joe Alexander and Wieden+Kennedy's Paul Colman left their positions after becoming subjects of internal investigations when the account named them. But the account now faces what may be the first of many tests: This summer, former CP+B staffer Ralph Watson filed a civil case accusing the account and those who run it of defamation. For its part, DMA says it's a free speech issue, setting up for what could be a legal battle with major ramifications. -- IL

SIMON PEEL

Global media director, Adidas

Between overhauling how Adidas tracks online ad spend in 2017 and managing the company's \$300 million media review in 2018, Simon Peel is no stranger to making big changes. As Adidas' global media director, Peel's role has grown in scope amid an industrywide cleanup of advertising, to the point where he feels it is now "more technical from an activation point of view." Those skills will be put to use during a year in which he will attempt to bring branding and e-commerce activations together, building on last year's efforts to scrap last-click attribution. Progress will be predicated, however, on changes at Adidas' media agencies. Peel is looking to build a sustainable model that rewards his account teams directly and also takes a long-term interest in their development. -- SJ





UKONWA OJO

SVP, CoverGirl

Rebranding a popular global cosmetics brand isn't for the faint of heart, but it's a challenge CoverGirl svp Ukonwa Ojo eagerly accepted. Ojo, a former Unilever executive, has played a significant role in modernizing CoverGirl, which Coty recently acquired. Under Ojo, CoverGirl has moved away from marketing makeup as a beautification tool, instead embracing its ability to forge confidence through self-expression. As part of this effort, CoverGirl revamped its products to be more inclusive of racially diverse skin tones, and it appointed its first male brand ambassador, James Charles. Ojo talks about overseeing CoverGirl's transformation.

What was the most challenging part of rebranding CoverGirl?

CoverGirl is the most beloved and iconic brand in beauty. As a result, the hardest part was the sheer magnitude and multifaceted nature of relaunching a brand this size. We had to refresh and modernize, while staying true to what people love about us.

How did you do that?

Listening to our CoverGirl community, we learned that makeup was so much more than a cosmetic. It was a powerful tool of self-expression and personal transformation, and there was an untapped opportunity to celebrate that. We revamped the entire way our consumers experience CoverGirl -- not only through the messaging, but through our products, packaging, online and in stores.

Why has it been important to move away from makeup as purely cosmetic?

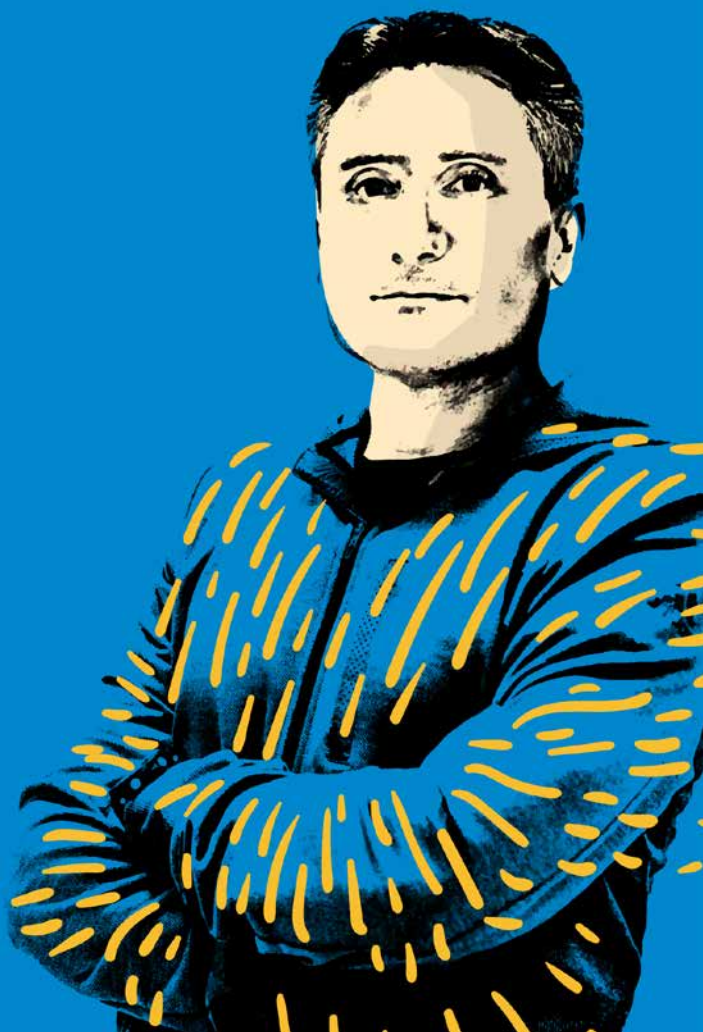
We learned that every day, customers armed with their makeup bag, a mirror and endless creativity were literally creating whatever version of themselves they wanted to express to the world. The insight that people use makeup as a tool for self-expression and transformation is at the core of our "I am what I make up" philosophy and part of the CoverGirl DNA. -- *Bethany Biron*

TOM CORBETT

Group head of sponsorship and media, Barclays

Many marketers talk a good game about new ways of working with agencies, but typically default to the usual models. Tom Corbett has spent 18 months establishing a new model, through which Barclays essentially pays Omnicom more to know exactly what media it buys and for how much. From the contract to the remuneration model, which has performance-related bonuses that add to a base annual fee, Corbett hit the reset button on the bank's media strategy. -- *SJ*





GERD MANZ

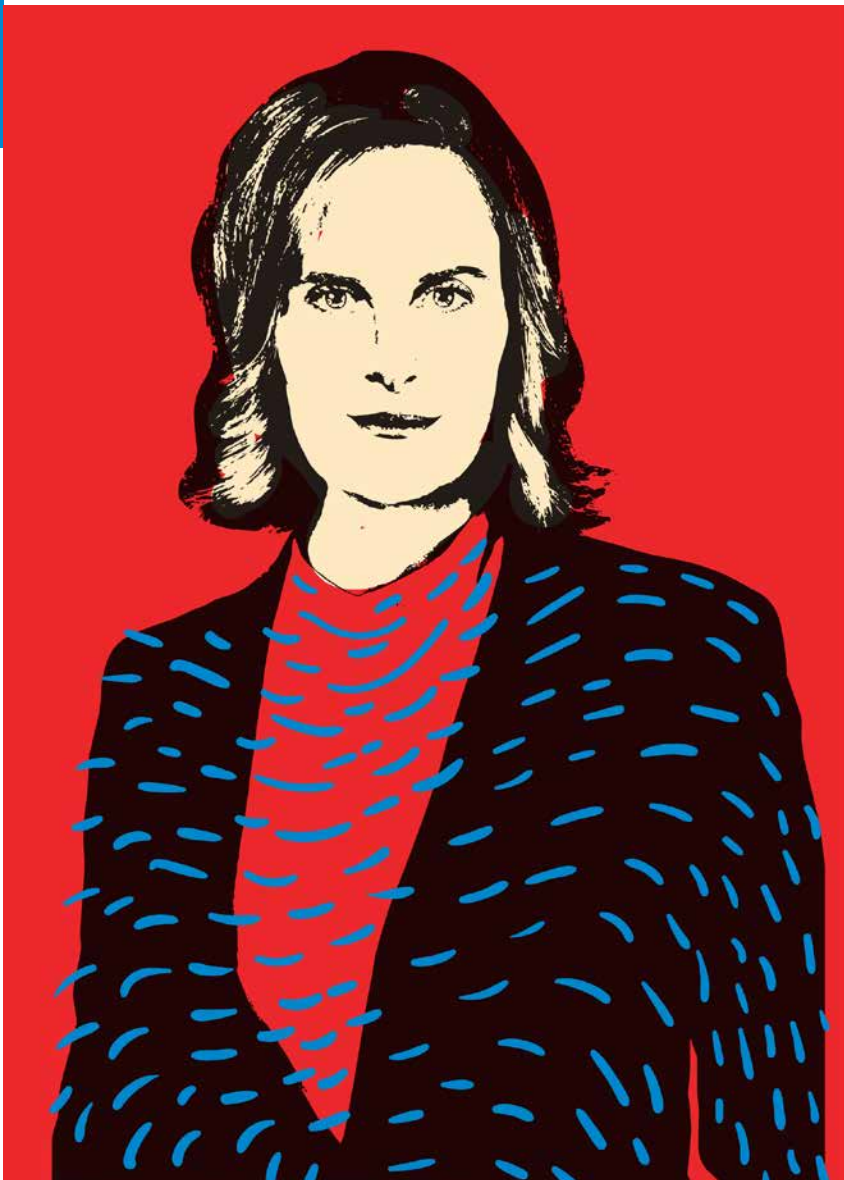
VP of technology innovation, Adidas

If you ask Gerd Manz, the future of footwear is robots -- specifically, speedy robots capable of crafting on-demand, customized sneakers. As vp of technology innovation at Adidas, Manz oversees Speedfactory, a manufacturing plant opened in Ansbach, Germany, in late 2015 that produces sneakers using 3D printing technology and computerized knitting. Three years later, Manz, who has worked on tech programs for Adidas since 1997, is watching Speedfactory evolve, including the recent opening of its second location, in Atlanta, in April. Speedfactory helps Manz simultaneously drive personalization capabilities, by allowing consumers to design and produce sneakers in a day, and bolster innovative marketing campaigns. Among them include AM4, also known as Adidas Made For, which are exclusive collections for specific cities that are designed by famous runners and influencers hailing from the respective locales. -- BB

LUBOMIRA ROCHET

Chief digital officer, L'Oréal

Lubomira Rochet is devoted to making sure L'Oréal represents the future of beauty. As chief digital officer, Rochet is in the midst of overseeing a multitiered approach to try to make L'Oréal the most innovative beauty company on the market. After overhauling the company's e-commerce and marketing strategies, she turned her focus to collaborations with tech companies like Google and Alibaba, intended to help get a leg up on L'Oréal's peers. This year, Rochet propelled L'Oréal even further with the acquisition of buzzy augmented reality platform ModiFace, which allows users to virtually try on products and experiment with color palettes from their mobile phone screens. Scooping up ModiFace, a beauty industry darling since it launched in 2001, provides L'Oréal with a significant advantage, giving its brands exclusive access to the coveted platform. -- BB





DONNA VIEIRA

Chief marketing officer, Chase Consumer Banking

Being a modern bank CMO is about more than advertising and media distribution; it's about delivering the look and feel of the customer banking experience in both the digital and physical worlds. Both are changing rapidly.

For Chase, they're also expanding. Last fall, Chase launched Finn, a digital-only bank for customers living outside Chase's 5,130-branch network; Donna Vieira was central to the creation of its identity and experience. At a time when almost every bank is closing branches, Chase has an aggressive strategy to build 400 across 20 new U.S. markets in the next five years, which it began in Washington, D.C., this spring. Vieira delivered channel growth of 5 percent with a return on investment 8 percent above goals for 2017. Her challenge now is to continue developing new relationship growth models, enhanced pricing and stronger field integration in "old" and new apps and branches. -- *Tanaya Macheel*

NISHMA ROBB

Marketing director, Google

A lot of lip service is paid to solving the lack of diversity in the ad industry. But Nishma Robb has been a tireless, charismatic driving force, encouraging a wide range of talent to venture into the industry. She has taken a leading role in urging young girls to pursue careers in technology, speaking at numerous corporate businesses and schools along the way. On top of her day job at Google, Robb spends a lot of her time mentoring and coaching young people, as well as supporting external, diversity-led initiatives, sometimes finding them space at Google to host events. Her mentees include Roshni Goyate and Leyya Sattar, the two founders of The Other Box, an award-winning platform for increasing diversity in the creative industries. -- *JD*





ALINE SANTOS

Global EVP of marketing,
head of diversity and inclusion, Unilever

It's been almost 30 years since Aline Santos joined Unilever as a marketing trainee, but it's her most recent role that has made the most impact. In the past year, she's managed to extend the Unilever maternity leave policy to 16 weeks globally and to bring "Unstereotype" -- the movement that has resulted in Dove campaigns like "My Beauty My Say" -- in-house. Santos led "Unstereotype" across Unilever offices globally to train employees and managers on unconscious bias as well as creating inclusive environments.

-- *Shareen Pathak*

BRIAN WHIPPLE

Global CEO, Accenture Interactive

The threat of consultancies overtaking agencies is real. As head of Accenture Interactive, the agency inside of consulting giant Accenture, Brian Whipple is the source of many ad executives' headaches. He's working to show that a consultancy can provide everything an agency can, plus more. In 2017, he led Accenture in opening a digital hub in Singapore, added industrial design capabilities to Accenture's offerings and acquired agencies SinnerSchrader, The Monkeys and Wire Stone. -- *IL*



CHRISTINE BEAUCHAMP

President, Amazon Fashion

When Amazon decided to be a fashion powerhouse, it needed someone fit for the challenge. Amazon turned to Christine Beauchamp, former CEO of Victoria's Secret Beauty and former president of Ann Taylor Stores. Within months of joining Amazon in May 2017, Beauchamp proved she had the acumen to transform a destination for toiletries and electronics into a place of style: Amazon closed the year with a total of 16 private-label fashion brands, raking in a collective \$21 million. -- *BB*



STEPH KOREY AND JEN RUBIO

Co-founders, Away

Despite cutting their teeth as early employees at Warby Parker and Casper, two companies that have come to define the modern direct-to-consumer brand landscape, Away founders Steph Korey and Jen Rubio are using a different blueprint to build their business.

They don't want to be unicorns. They don't want to reach an Uber-sized valuation. And they don't want to be labeled as industry disruptors.

"We're a digitally native brand that's very aware we need to still play in a traditional retail world," says Rubio. "It's nice to play in VC land and raise tons of money to recklessly grow your business. But at the end of the day, we're not an advertising company, and we're not a tech company. We're a retail brand."

Away sold its first suitcase in February 2016 and to date has sold more than 300,000, priced between \$225 and \$495. In 2017, the brand made \$48 million in sales, according to the company. It's opened four retail stores in the U.S. to date and launched its second product at the beginning of 2018: a shoulder bag with hidden straps that slide over and affix to the suitcase's handle for easy toting. In April, Away announced it would start shipping to Europe.

The growth engine behind all of this includes \$31 million from three rounds of venture capital funding as well as paid marketing on Facebook, Instagram and Google -- typical markings of a modern, digitally native brand grasping for quick growth. But Rubio says organic growth drives the majority of sales, through word-of-mouth, recommendations and customer retention. The company isn't actively seeking more funding, having raised its last round at the beginning of 2017.

"This is how Steph and I want to run our company: by financially sustaining ourselves as a business, while being able to stand by a long-term brand vision, because we're not constantly thinking about the exit plan that will pay back VCs," says Rubio.

Starting with the signature Away suitcase, the brand has expanded through small product variations driven internally as well as by strategic partnerships, including most recently a collaboration with model Karlie Kloss. Alongside the products, Away is investing in an editorial platform through a travel podcast, online site and print magazine, called "Here."

The goal is that the Away brand will eventually be tied to all points of travel, including destination inspiration, city recommendations, tips and guides, bookings, and lodging, as well as the luggage carried on the way. To do that, Rubio says, Away is laser-focused on establishing customer trust. The brand considers customer service to be one of its biggest investments, so it can continue to get feedback to the right people and react accordingly, even at scale.



That's the master plan. For now, Korey and Rubio just want to build the go-to luggage brand for people who never considered their luggage purchases, like those using hand-me-downs from their parents. The next step is tackling customers loyal to legacy brands.

"We have a big vision based on a product-by-product strategy," Rubio says. "What bag can we create today that could lead to people staying at an Away hotel in the future?"

-- Hilary Milnes



FROUKE BRUINSMA

Director of corporate responsibility, G-Star Raw

In February, Dutch denim brand G-Star Raw launched what were widely publicized as the most sustainable jeans ever. For the accomplishment, the brand can thank 14-year G-Star veteran Frouke Bruinsma, who made strides in their development over the past 10 years. “I call them our masterpiece,” she says of the style, named the Elwood RFTPi. “They combine everything we’ve been doing up to now.” The jeans, which are made of organic cotton and free of nonrecyclable elements like zippers, are produced using an indigo technology that necessitates no salt and minimal chemicals. Frouke’s goal is to raise G-Star’s entire product range to the same standard and help other brands follow suit. “You could keep them to yourself,” she says of G-Star’s production processes, “but then nothing will change.”

-- Jill Manoff

STEPHANIE HORTON

Chief strategy officer, Alexander Wang

In October, when fashion designer Alexander Wang stepped down as his namesake brand’s CEO, Stephanie Horton, former chief marketing officer at Farfetch, was named Wang’s chief strategy officer -- a new role created to aid expansion to new categories and territories. Wang then revealed plans to move off the traditional fashion calendar, which concentrates runway shows in February and September, to a schedule of showing collections in June and December. The move was widely regarded as a blow to New York Fashion Week, as Wang’s show and after-party were among the week’s biggest draws. Wang’s new setup has since been weighed as a viable solution to the event’s dwindling relevance. With it comes a move to two annual collections, versus four, plus the flexibility to deliver more drops of a wider range of product. -- Jill Manoff





TONY LIU AND LINDSEY SCHUYLER

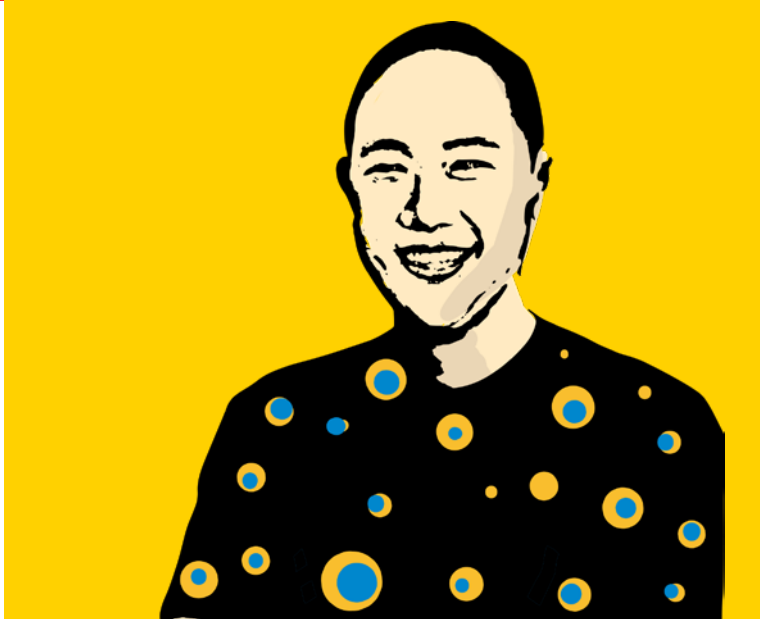
Co-founders, Diet Prada

The brainchild of designers Tony Liu and Lindsey Schuyler, Diet Prada began as an anonymous watchdog blog and Instagram account to track fashion copycats. Started in 2014, it now has close to half a million followers, an audience comprising fashion enthusiasts eager for the latest no-holds-barred post that keeps even the most high-end designers and popular celebrities on their toes. To date, Liu and Schuyler have ruffled the feathers of everyone from Stefano Gabbana to Kim Kardashian West, and they've gained the following and support of Alessandro Michele and Rihanna. -- BB

CHIEH HUANG

CEO, Boxed

It wasn't easy for Chieh Huang to launch an e-commerce site selling groceries and home products from the garage of his parents' house. Neither is it easy for his company, Boxed, to compete against juggernauts Amazon and Walmart, yet business is thriving. In three years, Boxed has gone from \$40,000 to \$100 million in revenue. Among the company's strategies: using artificial intelligence to predict when customers have run out of products and employing robots in fulfillment centers to save on overhead. -- IL



JERRY DAYKIN

Head of digital media partnerships, Diageo

Jerry Daykin's first 14 months as Diageo's first head of digital media partnerships are best encapsulated by the advertiser's Trusted Marketplace of media owners, which allows it to continually assess and review whether ads on the likes of Google and Facebook are working in the way they should. He has also forged close relationships between Spotify and Diageo's Smirnoff and Captain Morgan brands. -- SJ



ALMA HAR'EL

Director and Free The Bid founder

Alma Har'el was on a phone call discussing an upcoming commercial shoot for Stella Artois when she heard it. "You're the first female director we have shooting a commercial for us."

"It's like something clicked for me in that moment," says Har'el, who at the time had worked in commercial and music video making for just over six years.

It wasn't like she didn't know the statistics: About 10 percent of creative directors at agencies are women, and fewer than 7 percent of directors are female, according to The 3% Movement, an organization that supports creative female talent and leadership. That number is in line with the 9 percent of the top films in 2015 that were directed by women. So the fact that one of the biggest companies in the world, which is known for creative, "filmy" commercials that are any director's dream, had never worked with a woman in its 20-year history of advertising should have been unsurprising.

"It became real for me," says Har'el, whom Mashable then interviewed for a piece about how women were systematically being shut out of the filmmaking process.

It would have been easy to end it there -- the piece went viral, creating a loud-enough shout that maybe something would have changed. But Har'el wanted to change the system. She and PJ Pereira, the co-founder of Pereira & O'Dell, thought of an idea to use the common triple bid process for scouting directors to mandate there be at least one woman director bid on every pitch.

That idea took a life of its own -- Har'el formally launched an initiative, called Free The Bid, getting support from a plethora of major agencies.

But it's brands that matter, and Har'el's idea was so simple and so doable as a "fix" that even advertisers known for stodgy, bureaucratic processes got an easy solution to the problem. HP was the first, with its own diversity initiative dovetailing the pledge. Companies like Visa, Nestle and Coca-Cola followed.

Today, Free The Bid has 450 directors in its database, another stroke of genius meant to make it even easier for companies to source the female directors they need. "There are certain structures of power in corporate," Har'el says. "The key is to work within them to break them."

-- Shareen Pathak





THIBAUT PORTAL

Global media hub leader, Pernod Ricard

It's telling that it was Pernod Ricard's CEO Alexandre Ricard who first drew attention to the advertiser's programmatic efforts last year, rather than the marketer behind them. Thibaut Portal doesn't like the spotlight, but his impact on Pernod Ricard's programmatic strategy is hard to ignore. Since he took charge of the company's media team in 2015, it has struck more direct deals with ad tech companies; now, around a quarter of the advertiser's digital media is bought by its own marketers. Over the last year, Portal has pushed the company to ditch video views as a key performance indicator and instead prioritize completion rates. Looking ahead, Portal wants greater transparency not just on the inventory that Pernod Ricard buys, but the data it feeds into its demand-side platforms. -- SJ

CHRISTIAN HAHN

VP of marketing, communications, strategy and media, Deutsche Telekom

More than a few agency executives were anxious when Christian Hahn, Deutsche Telekom's vp of marketing, communications, strategy and media, said he wanted to take back control of the company's media budgets in 2017. Hahn spread the tasks one media agency was paid to do across several specialists in areas like media analytics services and programmatic operations, but still found a role for agency GroupM. GroupM handles media buying for Deutsche Telekom's traditional media, while the telecommunications firm's media team takes more responsibility for ads bought online. Rather than in-house all media buying, Hahn found a way to exert more control over the most important parts. -- SJ



RICHARD NOCKLES

VR creative director, Sky

When trying to define a new genre, getting inspiration from existing forms is key. For Richard Nockles and his team, that's shooting 360-degree video and virtual reality as if it's a theater production. Nockles has worked on integrating VR into regular broadcasts across news, sports and drama at Sky since February 2016, drawing parallels from his 10-year career as an architect. His aim is to merge the boldness and brashness of football matches from the vantage point of the goal post with the intimacy of being beside players waiting in the tunnel. For this, Nockles has to get close to his subjects, a level of trust that many wouldn't have offered a few years ago. "Teams listen to us," he says. "That means a lot." -- LS



DIGIDAY