

Exclusive: Playboy Names Phillip Picardi Chief Brand Officer and Editor in Chief

The white smoke has risen from the Playboy Mansion.

On Tuesday, the iconic publisher appointed media veteran Phillip Picardi as its new chief brand officer and editor in chief, ushering in a new chapter for a legacy brand looking to reestablish its relevance in the modern era.

In joining the company, Picardi brings more than a decade of experience reshaping publications into cultural touchstones.

In his first turn in the editorial world, he repositioned Teen Vogue as an arbiter of the Gen Z zeitgeist, founded the queer-focused publication, *them*, at Condé Nast, and served as editor in chief of Out Magazine. (*Them* was spun off in February to Equalpride, which owns Out.)

Most recently, he was chief brand officer at Weight Watchers, and has consulted for brands including Nike, LEGO, and Loewe.

His hire comes just days after Playboy named David Miller, formerly an executive vice president at National Geographic, as its new president of media and brand. In departing the House of Mouse for the Bunny, Miller aims to lay the commercial foundation necessary for the wider reinvention of the outlet.

Picardi joins Playboy following stints at them and Out Magazine.*Playboy*

Taken together, the two hires suggest that Playboy is making a coordinated bet. As the publisher approaches its 75th anniversary, Miller's licensing and media expertise, combined with Picardi's editorial ambitions, aims to create a sustainable, culturally relevant business.

For Picardi, the opportunity was less about a job change than a cultural calling.

"Our moment right now is both extremely prudish and extremely pornographic," he told ADWEEK. "The idea that we need a publication that is able to explain sexuality as a cultural force, especially as our younger folks are facing a sex recession and loneliness epidemic—it felt like the right

challenge.”

While the position only became official this week, Picardi has been working with Playboy since November in a consulting capacity, helping to lay the groundwork for what is shaping up to be a broad editorial revival.

In that time, the company has relaunched its print magazine, introduced a new class of Playmates, and launched a Substack newsletter blending new writing with archival material, fiction, and longform essays. The brand is also reviving signature franchises like the Playboy Interview in a video and social-first format.

Picardi will also become the first openly gay man to helm the historically heterosexual outlet, an appointment in line with the broader Playboy ethos of championing progressive causes.

“Queer rights don’t exist without women’s rights,” Picardi said. “These things are connected, and Playboy has always been very engaged with that.”

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