

The Biggest TV Executive Departures of 2020



As traditional advertising revenue collapsed and consumers flocked to streaming, 2020 has been a big year of change for traditional media's business models. It's also meant a lot of executive changes. As part of our annual Year in Review coverage, we took a look at the more than two dozen executive departures—double the 15 we counted in 2019—to give a sense of just how dramatically the TV landscape has shifted in the last 12 tumultuous months.

Rich Calacci, Pluto TV

The chief revenue officer of ad-supported streamer Pluto TV headed for the exit in mid-January a month after the ViacomCBS merger was finalized. Calacci's departure was one of several that came as ViacomCBS ad sales chief Jo Ann Ross set her ad sales leadership team. Others departing included Valerie Bischak, Viacom's evp of ad solutions; Mary Ellen Bottone, Smithsonian Channel's svp of ad sales; Michael DuPont, Pop TV's evp of ad sales; Bryson Gordon, Viacom evp of advanced advertising; and David Paschkes, CBS Experiences' evp and

managing director.

Bill Abbott, Crown Media Family Networks

The president and CEO of Crown Media Family Networks and Hallmark Channel exited the company in late January a month after Hallmark Channel faced heat for pulling ads that depicted a same-sex couple kissing at their wedding at the behest of an anti-LGBT group. The decision to pull the ads led to a #BoycottHallmark campaign started by wedding planning brand Zola, whose ads had been flagged. Abbott's position remained empty until August, when Wonya Lucas, the former president and CEO of Public Broadcasting Atlanta, took over at the top of the company.

Randy Freer, Hulu

The CEO left the streamer abruptly in late January as Disney looked to further integrate Hulu into its broader streaming operations after assuming full operational control from Comcast in 2019. Kelly Campbell was elevated from chief marketing officer to president in late February.

Bob Iger, Disney

Iger's announcement that he would step down as CEO of Disney in February marked the end of an era at the entertainment giant. The announcement came with the news that Bob Chapek, the company's former chairman of Disney Parks, experiences and products, would take over, just weeks before the Covid-19 pandemic hit—and at a critical moment for Disney+, which fast became the most crucial part of the company's business. (Iger remains as executive chairman, overseeing the company's creative endeavors through 2021.)

Joe Ianniello, CBS Entertainment Group

The longtime president and CEO of the broadcaster's entertainment group, who had been acting CEO of CBS following Les Moonves' disgraceful exit in March, left as the executive

shakeout from the ViacomCBS merger continued. George Cheeks, the former chairman of NBCUniversal Content Studios, headed in to take Ianniello's place leading CBS Entertainment Group as president and CEO.

Brian Lesser, Xandr

AT&T's ad unit Xandr in March saw the unexpected departure of its CEO as the company was losing some external prominence as AT&T pivoted to focus more aggressively on video advertising. Chief business officer Kirk McDonald was named interim head a day later, but he, too, exited Xandr in August.

Peter Naylor, Hulu

The streaming service's longtime ad sales chief headed for the exits in April to take on a role at Snap as vp of Americas, as Hulu's ad sales team faced further integration into Disney and began reporting directly to Disney ad sales chief Rita Ferro. Following his departure, Hulu vp of national ad sales Jim Keller was given more purview—but he would also announce his own exit by year's end.

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