WarnerMedia and Xandr Will Join Forces for 2020 Upfronts

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Next year, advertisers won't have to attend separate upfront presentations for WarnerMedia and Xandr. The two AT&T-owned companies will combine forces during the 2020 Upfronts in a presentation intended to highlight the companies' existing and future advertising capabilities along with new programming, the companies announced Tuesday.

"May 13 will be a culmination of two years of commitment, collaboration and innovation with our partners at Xandr to make superlative advertising solutions available in market today, alongside premium content that matters to audiences globally," WarnerMedia chief revenue officer and WarnerMedia International Networks president Gerhard Zeiler said in a statement.

"Our sales teams have been in market for well over a year, hosting dozens of client meetings and developing tangible solutions for partners. This moment signals a significant shift as we come together to showcase the full scope of possibilities in storytelling."

The presentation, which will take place on May 13, 2020, represents a shift from this year's upfront schedule, during which WarnerMedia and Xandr held separate presentations that nonetheless centered on overlapping advertising opportunities. WarnerMedia's 2019 upfront presentation highlighted its "data-driven" capabilities and its broad portfolio, while Xandr held a less conventional presentation that centered on its premium video marketplace Community and the company's addressable TV

targeting and metrics tools.

The combination, though, isn’t unexpected, and the decision highlights how AT&T is looking to combine and streamline its growing portfolio. AT&T finalized its acquisition of WarnerMedia, then known as Time Warner, in 2018. The telecom giant unveiled Xandr the same year, only months after it bought the ad-tech firm AppNexus.

WarnerMedia is building out its anticipated subscription video-on-demand service HBO Max, which is set to debut in May 2020. An ad-supported version of the service, which will operate using Xandr’s tech pipes, is scheduled to debut sometime in 2021; details about what advertisers will be able to expect on that AVOD platform will be detailed during the joint presentation, according to the company.

The person who will lead WarnerMedia’s side of the presentation, though, still remains to be seen. Former WarnerMedia ad sales chief Donna Speciale exited the company just a week after wrapping its 2019 upfront negotiations. Zeiler has been leading the WarnerMedia ad sales team in the interim, but a permanent replacement has not yet been named.

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