

Relevance Conference Is AT&T's Way Of Introducing Its Advertising Business

Unit's goal is to 'make advertising matter'

BY JON LAFAYETTE

AT&T IS gathering some of the top people from the media world to christen its new advertising business and debate the state of TV advertising.

The unit, headed by former GroupM executive Brian Lesser and originally called AT&T Advertising Analytics, will be rebranding this week at what the company is calling the Relevance Conference in Santa Barbara, Calif.

"We realized there isn't advertising without analytics and data anymore," Kirk McDonald, chief marketing officer for the unit, said. "It was a little like saying we were color TV. All TVs are in color."

Making Ads Matter

At a time when many marketers are questioning the effectiveness of TV advertising and consumers are avoiding commercials on ad-free streaming services like Netflix, the AT&T unit's ambition is to



AT&T's Kirk McDonald: "We don't assume we're the only solution. We know there are other really smart ones."

make advertising matter.

"While data and technology have sort of surfaced to enable our ability to get the right message to the right audiences at the right times, we're still sort of driving it like a 16-year-



AT&T will offer details of its ad unit's rebranding during this week's inaugural Relevance Conference.

old kid who borrowed their dad's Chevy," McDonald said. "It's jerky and you can't quite get first gear right."

Advanced advertising today gets a lot of things right. Consumers get information about brands they're interested in, but sometimes those viewers are over-targeted and continue to get ads for those same brands even after a purchase is completed.

"Consumers are voting with their time and attention, so how do we engage in better ways to allow brands to have the conversation they want and allow consumers to experience the content they want?" McDonald said. "We think AT&T is really well-positioned, given this arc of change as we become a modern media company, to tackle that."

About 200 people from media agencies, marketing companies, marketing tech and advertising tech companies and programmers will be able to demo some new AT&T ad products, but only a handful of the speakers at the three-day conference will be AT&T executives, including Lesser and AT&T chairman

and CEO Randall Stephenson.

The bulk of the program will tackle industry-wide issues. Attendees will hear from former baseball star Derek Jeter, now a content maker as a founder of the *Players Tribune*; actress Issa Rae of HBO's *Insecure*; basketball star-turned-sportscaster Grant Hill; soccer player-turned-influencer Abby Wambach; LeBron James business manager Maverick Carter; Arianna Huffington of *The Huffington Post*; and Jeffrey Katzenberg and Meg Whitman, who have raised \$1 billion for a new mobile video streaming service.

AT&T will also be sharing the results of two new studies. One is the inaugural AT&T Relevancy Report, a survey of 3,000 consumers which found that 66% of consumers wish advertising was more relevant to their interests and lifestyle, while 57% said ads are not relevant to them. The other is more industry-focused, looking at the way advertising is bought and sold.

Fixing what's wrong with TV advertising has been the theme of a number of gatherings recently. Linda Yaccarino, chairman of ad sales at NBCUniversal, held an industry-wide meeting on the future of advertising in New York last year, and Fox's ad revenue president, Joe Marchese, brought executives to the company's

studio for a discussion earlier this year.

McDonald said AT&T Advertising expects to have this sort of conference annually.

"We don't assume we're the only solution," he said. "We know there are other really smart ones."

Open for Business

AT&T is building a platform it would like other companies to use. Executives from NBCUniversal, Fox, CBS and Viacom are expected to be in attendance.

"Our job is to build a new kind of advertising company, a marketplace for premium content," McDonald said. "We want to make sure that the way we deal with inventory sources, even our owned-and-operated inventory sources, is done in a way that is in the best interest of the consumer and then the buyer. So to the degree that we can create technology that enables a more effective buy, a more efficient sell and a better experience for the consumer, that's what we're going to do."

One of those owned inventory sources is Turner, acquired when AT&T bought Time Warner.

"Our visions are so aligned," said Turner ad sales president Donna Speciale, who has been campaigning for more targeted advertising and creating a better experience for consumers. Turner has been among the leaders in introducing advanced advertising products that target specific audiences rather than demographic groups.

AT&T expects the data it is bringing to the platform to boost the effectiveness of Turner's ad inventory, and raise the amount of money it generates.

"We're in the process of doing a lot of testing right now with their data," Speciale said. "I'm not going to bring anything out to market until we do the testing, so right now, fourth-quarter [2018] is all about beta-testing with our product. The goal in 2019 is to bring some examples and case studies to CES and then show how the data enhances our products." ❏



THE WATCHMAN

Senior content producer Michael Malone's weekly look at the programming scene

Making 'Magnum' Their Own, FX Ventures to Oz, New Fox Comedy Pretty 'Cool'

The fall season is here! *Magnum P.I.* starts on CBS Sept. 24. Stephen Hill plays T.C., and said he reached out to Roger E. Mosley, who played T.C. in the original series.

He told Mosley he would "pay homage" when he could to Mosley's helicopter-driving henchman. At Comic-Con, Hill wore a beret, as Mosley at times did on *Magnum*.

At the TCA Summer Press Tour last month, Hill mentioned how Mosley instructed him to make the character his own. "He said, 'Don't worry about me,'" Hill said. "'Higgins is a woman now. They're not trying to do the same show. Make it your own.'"

Magnum, of course, shoots in Hawaii. "It's beautiful, but it can be lonely," Hill said. "At this point in my life, I actually like the loneliness."

Mr. Inbetween starts on FX Sept. 25. Australian Scott Ryan stars in this unique series. Ryan made the film *The Magician*, a mockumentary about a hit man, in Australia back in 2005. The series is based on the film. Ryan plays a criminal for hire who's balancing the responsibilities of fatherhood. Nash Edgerton directs the series, which was shot in Australia.

The Magician was critically lauded, and commercially ignored. Ryan came to the States to do a new film, and it fell through. He delivered pizzas and drove a cab.

"I lost the desire to make anything," he said during TCA. "I figured I'd get a 9 to 5, do what everybody else does."

Then FX called.

Ryan said he made *The Magician* for \$3,000. He wrote, produced, acted and provided the catering. It's a different story with *Mr. Inbetween*. "It was great to have other people to help," he said. "It made it a lot easier."

And *The Cool Kids* starts on Fox Sept. 28, leading out of *Last Man Standing*. Martin Mull, David Alan Grier, Vicki Lawrence and Leslie Jordan play high-energy senior citizens in an old folks' home.

Mull, who just turned 75, refers to the project as "my gold watch" after a long career in entertainment. "To work with David and Leslie and Vicki and Charlie [Day, executive producer] on a thing that's



Mr. Inbetween

20 minutes from my house," he said, "it's my thank you note for doing this for 50 years."

Mull credits Day, of *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, for having the knack "to find the right line to fit in the right place."

Roles for guys his age, Mull said, are between him, Steve Martin and Chevy Chase. "Steve is busy playing his banjo and Chevy doesn't want to do it," Mull said. "So let's get Martin Mull."



Magnum P.I.

FATES AND FORTUNES EXEC MOVES OF THE WEEK

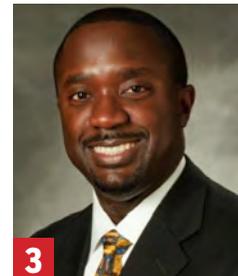
■ **(1) JUSTIN DRAPER** has been named VP and general manager of CBS's Sacramento, Calif., duopoly, KQVR and KMAX. Draper, who was most recently financial controller at CBS-owned KCBS and KCAL in Los Angeles, succeeds Jay Howell at the KQVR and KMAX helm. Howell was tapped in June to lead CBS's Pittsburgh stations, KDKA and WPCW. ■ **(2) JULIE CHEN MOONVES** is stepping down as co-host of CBS's *The Talk*. Chen's move followed a short leave from the show after her husband Leslie Moonves stepped down as chairman and CEO of CBS amid allegations of harassment. Chen will reportedly continue to host CBS's *Big Brother* through fall 2019. ■ **(3) BRIAN NURSE**



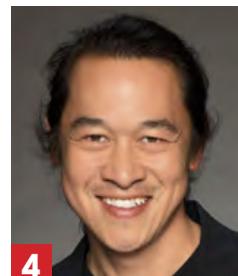
1



2



3



4



5

has been appointed senior VP, general counsel and secretary for the WWE. Nurse, who will report to WWE chairman and CEO Vince McMahon, will oversee legal affairs and serve as principal legal advisor to McMahon, co-presidents George Barrios and Michelle Wilson, and the company's executive management team.

Freeform has tapped **(4) RICHARD ENG** as VP, creative, branding and design. Eng, who was previously executive creative director at Loyalkaspar, will lead Freeform's campaign development and manage the network's brand identity. He reports to Tricia Melton, senior VP, marketing, creative and branding at Freeform.

■ **BRIAN EDWARDS** has been advanced to president, MGM Television Operations, overseeing all business aspects of MGM's television and digital productions. Edwards, whose contract was extended through mid-2022, will continue to report to MGM Global Television Group chairman Mark Burnett. ■ **(5) PATRICIO TEUBAL**

has been named general manager of A+E Networks Italy starting in December. Teubal will oversee the company's three channels in Italy: History, Crime+Investigation and Blaze. He joins from media and sports adviser Blackant, where he was managing director. He was also founder of Cucu Sports.

STAT OF THE WEEK

31%

— Increase in views of premium video content delivered either live or on-demand via set-top boxes in the second quarter, compared to a year ago, according to a report from FreeWheel.

