

BIOGRAPHY



DEBRA OCONNELL

President, ABC News Group and Disney Entertainment Networks, The Walt Disney Company

Debra OConnell is president of ABC News Group and Disney Entertainment Networks, reporting to Disney Entertainment Co-Chairman Dana Walden. She oversees ABC News and the ABC Owned Television Stations, aligning the nation's No. 1 news network with the No. 1 station group in the country. She also has operational leadership, including P&L oversight of the company's multiplatform linear entertainment networks — ABC broadcast network, Disney Channels, FX Networks, Freeform, and National Geographic Channels — across the U.S., Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA), Latin America (LATAM) and Asia Pacific (APAC) regions.

With more than 25 years at the company, OConnell has served as president and general manager of ABC7/WABC-TV New York, the most-watched station in the country. She had overall management responsibility for the station and all its ancillary businesses, as well as "Live with Kelly and Ryan." Under her leadership, the long-running hit syndicated series became the No. 1 daytime talk show for the first time in franchise history. In her previous executive roles, she served as executive vice president, Sales and Marketing, of Disney|ABC's consolidated advertising sales group; president, National TV Sales, ABC Owned Television Station; and vice president of Marketing at WABC-TV.

She is a seasoned executive with broad business acumen and deep operational experience. Most recently, OConnell was inducted into Broadcasting & Cable's Hall of Fame Class of 2024, was named Broadcasting & Cable's Broadcaster of the Year 2022 and was honored with a 2022 Gracie Leadership Award from the Alliance of Women in Media. In 2018, Multichannel News named her among their Wonder Women of the year.

OConnell is on the board of directors for A&E Networks, National Geographic Partners, and TVB (Chair, 2021–2022), a not-for-profit trade association representing America's local broadcast television industry. She is on the Alliance for Women in Media Board, which connects, recognizes, and inspires women across the media industry. She is an ex officio member of the board of directors and previously served as chairman of the International Radio & Television Society (IRTS), a well-respected industry organization that focuses on mentorship, access, education and diversity. OConnell serves on the V

Foundation event board and advisory boards for the Ryan Seacrest Foundation. She previously held board positions with the NY State Broadcasters Association and The Broadway Association.

Additionally, OConnell is an active participant in The Walt Disney Company's VoluntEARS program and was honored with the Executive Champion Award for her vigorous support and involvement. She is also involved with many other charitable initiatives, including Sade Baderinwa's Get Reel Foundation. In 2022, she was recognized as an NY Edge honoree for her support of their work bridging the opportunity gap for kids across the NYC area.

OConnell also serves as a mentor, which is one of the most gratifying parts of her career — to be able to give back, provide insight and guidance, and watch amazing talent and individuals with possibility grow. She has been recognized multiple times by the International Radio & Television Society Foundation's Hall of Mentorship for her many contributions across the industry, including in 2021 and in fall 2025, when she was honored with their prestigious Gold Medal Award.

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