

# Developing Meaningful Connections with Audiences

An Interview with **Christa A. D'Alimonte**,  
Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary, Viacom

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Christa D'Alimonte joined Viacom as Senior Vice President, Deputy General Counsel and Assistant Secretary in 2012 from Shearman & Sterling LLP, where she was Deputy Practice Group Leader of the Firm's Global Mergers & Acquisitions group. D'Alimonte joined Shearman & Sterling in 1993, and became a partner in January 2001. D'Alimonte graduated from Georgetown University Law Center and received her A.B. in Politics and a Certificate of Proficiency in Latin American Studies from Princeton University.*



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**COMPANY BRIEF** *Viacom (viacom.com) is home to premier global media brands that create compelling entertainment content – including television programs, motion pictures, short-form content, apps, games, consumer products, podcasts, live events and social media experiences – for audiences in more than 180 countries. Viacom's media networks, including Nickelodeon, Nick Jr., MTV, BET, Comedy Central, Spike (to be rebranded as Paramount Network in the U.S.), VH1, TVLand, CMT, Logo, Channel 5 (U.K.), Telefe (Argentina), Colors (India) and Paramount Channel, reach approximately 4.3 billion cumulative television subscribers worldwide. Paramount Pictures is a major global producer and distributor of filmed entertainment. Paramount Television develops, finances and produces original programming for television and digital platforms.*

## Will you discuss your role at Viacom and your key areas of focus?

As General Counsel and Secretary, I guide global legal affairs for the company, overseeing a team of more than 600 employees worldwide who together make up the Viacom Law Department. We work across all of our brands and business units, coordinating legal functions to advance our strategic priorities and growth initiatives. Additionally, I advise and support our Board of Directors on governance matters, ensuring that Viacom fulfills its duties to our investors and other key stakeholders.

We are continuously working to enhance and improve collaboration both within the department and with other teams across the organization. In many companies, the law department is perceived as a place where you go to get an answer to a specific question (and often a “no”). We approach things differently at Viacom – our overarching philosophy is to partner closely

with our clients on an ongoing basis, thinking creatively at every step and helping the company move forward on its ambitious strategic plan. We have an outstanding team across all disciplines and our clients recognize the real value the legal affairs team brings to the table, day in and day out.

## What have been the keys to Viacom's consistent leadership in the industry and what makes Viacom's brands so strong?

Viacom has one the leading portfolios of media brands in the world, powered by employees who are the best at what they do – creating, delivering and supporting entertainment content that people love. The drive to develop meaningful connections with audiences has always stood at the core of Viacom and is even more important today as our industry moves into a more interactive and deeply exciting era.

Currently, we are focused on executing against a strategy to unlock the full potential of our business by strengthening our core group of global brands, including MTV, Nickelodeon, Comedy Central, BET and Paramount, while diversifying our offerings and accelerating our push into next-generation digital and mobile platforms. For my team, that means leveraging our expertise around production, distribution, technology, data and so many other areas across the business. There's a lot of reinvention at work, and it's thrilling to be a part of it.

At the same time, we're also boosting our commitment to providing audiences with world-class content and experiences. This month, we'll be launching Paramount Network, a rebrand of the Spike channel, which features a whole new lineup of premium programming that's going to set new standards for scripted drama on television. All of this work underscores a long-held willingness to be bold and to take smart risks to evolve and grow.

## What advice do you give to young women interested in a career in entertainment law?

While we have made significant progress in the field of entertainment law, there is always more work to do. Viacom has a great deal of gender diversity, and that includes the composition of our board, which is comprised of 50 percent women – far greater than the average among Fortune 500 companies. Within Viacom we have a wonderfully diverse array of influential, inspiring and brilliant female leaders.

Young lawyers today often feel a need to specialize early in their careers – and I think the true path to success is to avoid this approach. While successful lawyers certainly have technical expertise, a great lawyer distinguishes herself by showing sound judgment, providing thoughtful advice and counsel on a variety of matters and demonstrating the ability to identify – and anticipate – a multitude of issues. The early years of one's career should be about getting as broad an education as possible. I also can't overstate the importance of being flexible in making career choices. It's great to have goals, and to have a strong view of where you would like to be in 2, 5, 10 years or longer, but make sure to keep your eyes open, be willing to pivot if a great opportunity comes along, and realize that your career is long. The path from start to end is not necessarily a straight line.

## Viacom is a leader in corporate responsibility and community engagement. Would you discuss these efforts?

Giving back to our communities is central to who we are, and as a company that operates globally across a large number of businesses, this unites us all in a deeply meaningful way. Our corporate social responsibility programs build more inclusive societies, pioneer positive social change and promote healthy living, among other key focus areas.

Perhaps the most impressive display of this collaboration is our annual worldwide day of service, Viacomcommunity Day, which is now in its 22nd year. This past April, thousands of Viacom employees in 16 countries participated in support of more than 150 community service projects that ranged from providing humanitarian assistance for displaced refugees to giving pro bono legal aid for those applying for U.S. citizenship to leading job training and mentoring sessions for students interested in media and entertainment.

Pro bono work has also been a longtime focus of the Viacom Law Department. Our legal teams often partner with law firms and other organizations on unique public service projects, counseling NGOs seeking compliance with state legal requirements, or assisting them with simple bylaw and governance issues that are critical to their operations. We also participate in pro bono legal clinics for local community groups that are working to improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods, providing training and consultation that may be difficult to come by elsewhere. It's incredibly humbling to see the small role we play in advancing initiatives that make an enormous difference in people's lives. ●