

Staying Relevant

An Interview with Ellen Levine,
Editorial Director, Hearst Magazines



Ellen Levine

EDITORS' NOTE *Ellen Levine became the first-ever Editorial Director for Hearst Magazines in July 2006. She made publishing history in October 1994 when she became the first woman to be named Editor-in-Chief of Good Housekeeping since the magazine's inception in 1885. Before this appointment, Levine served as Editor-in-Chief of two other major women's magazines—Redbook and Woman's Day—and as a senior editor of Cosmopolitan. While at Woman's Day, she was also Senior Vice President of Hachette Magazines, Inc. In January 2004, Levine was inducted into the Magazine Editors' Hall of Fame by ASME and the Magazine Publishers of America.*

COMPANY BRIEF *A unit of Hearst Corporation, Hearst Magazines (www.hearst.com), is one of the world's largest publishers of monthly magazines, with 20 U.S. titles and close to 300 international editions. The company also publishes 19 magazines in the United Kingdom through its wholly owned subsidiary, Hearst Magazines U.K.*

How do you keep things so fresh, and what is the secret editorially?

The secret is to have a terrific editor at the head of each of these magazines who understands we're in a different day and age now. You cannot ride with the same point of view, writing style, image selection, and typography as you might have been able to even seven years ago.

Some of our magazines are 140-plus years old, and we constantly freshen the voice and graphics to keep them current.

This wasn't a priority in the past, but the readership has changed and will continue to change.

How do you maintain an innovative edge?

Everybody has to realize that change is welcome now. Women don't want a whole different life, but the way they live their lives has changed. They want to be happy and look great, and not worry about money and have healthy families, but the way they get these things has changed. Women are the change agents today.

What will keep print successful long term?

Relevancy. People have become accustomed to the quick delivery of information. Women in focus groups tell us they don't have enough time and they need to be better organized. If you can package the information they want in a voice that is appealing and you can deliver across many different platforms—but you maintain the overall voice for the brand you're working on—print will stay relevant.

It's also still important for women to be able to tear out a piece of paper and take it with them.

What is it about Hearst that has kept you there?

The people who work here are smart, and if you want to talk to the CEO, you can and he listens.

It's welcoming and there is a high level of honesty. I feel a lot more comfortable working with people who share the same goals, and who are upfront about everything.

Hearst is part of my family.

Are the opportunities growing for women in this industry?

They are greater than they have ever been. Women just need to know themselves. One of the best pieces of advice for all of us is to know what we're terrific at and what we're not, and hire to our own personal weaknesses, not to our strengths.

There is a deep-rooted need for communication—this will not go away. Journalism is communication and there are many forms of it. ●

Valuing the Workforce

An Interview with Scherri Roberts,
Senior Vice President of Human Resources, Hearst Magazines



Scherri Roberts

EDITORS' NOTE *Scherri Roberts was appointed to her current post in January 2012. Roberts previously held the position of Vice President/Director of Human Resources for Hearst Magazines since February 2007. She was formerly the Director of Human Resources at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. She returned to Hearst Magazines after serving as its Director of Human Resources from 2001 to 2004, and as Executive Director of Human Resources from 2004 to 2006. Roberts has also held positions in human resources and marketing management at Phase2Media, Children's Television Workshop, Cigna Corporation, Zeneca Inc., and Bell Atlantic Corporation.*

How can you maintain an intimate feel with the size of the workforce at Hearst?

It comes from the top. It's important to us that our execs practice what we preach, in terms of valuing our workforce. We try to demonstrate by the way we interact with one another, and the way we show our appreciation for the staff's commitment, as we know that Hearst's achievements would not be possible without them.

Our people are smart, creative, and passionate about our products, and about the company. Our best employees believe in treating each other with respect. We have a reputation for this within the industry.

Within international markets, do you generally seek local talent?

We traditionally partner with the people in whatever region we're operating in. We license our brands in many instances, and we work with talent in the local market to produce magazines that fit within the Hearst template while reflecting the tastes of the region, so there is an inherent authenticity.

In general, we have a reputation as a company that knows how to be a good partner. We show an ability to work with others to produce strong products, both in the U.S. and internationally.

How critical are the training programs within Hearst?

We invest in employee development, and we did that even in the depths of the recession. We invested in digital training for our editorial workforce in partnership with CUNY, and put virtually all of our magazine brands through multiplatform journalism training.

We asked the university to develop a program to teach us how to make a story live on all platforms before anyone else was investing in that training. We also expanded that with digital training to our sales force.

We have training for our first-line managers. We conduct special training for people we consider to be strong number twos, who have the potential to be department heads, publishers, and editors-in-chief, since we believe in internal mobility.

How does an engaged leadership help drive your success and retain talent?

It's so important. We have a weekly executive team meeting where we talk about strategic imperatives for the company. My participation enables me to understand our goals, and turn that understanding into programs for the company.

We have an internal speaker series called thincTANK that permits us to share best practices, and an employee recognition program that reinforces the achievement-orientated behavior that we need to exhibit to succeed as a workforce.

We are fortunate to work for a strong company that is privately held and diversified. These attributes help us retain great talent. ●