

From Tactical to Strategic

An Interview with Debra C. Robinson,
Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer, Hearst Magazines



Debra C. Robinson

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to being appointed Chief Technology Officer, Debra Robinson was Vice President, Technology and Production, Digital Media for Hearst Magazines. Robinson was also interim Chief Information Officer of CDS Global. Before coming to Hearst, Robinson held executive positions at Primedia, CVS Pharmacy, CMP Media, Delaware North Companies, and Aramark. During her time at CMP Media, Robinson was the executive sponsor for the release of the Mason server architecture into the open source community in 1997. Mason now powers the Web infrastructure for a wide variety of sites. Robinson is a graduate of The Wharton School, and also has a Master's of Science from the University of Pennsylvania.

What are the key initiatives that have made you such a leader in your area?

We're very focused on moving from tactical to strategic initiatives. Currently, there are significant projects going on to consolidate all of the infrastructure activity at a corporate versus business unit level, which freed up my time and resources to focus on projects that are strategic for the magazine group.

One of these strategic initiatives is a content platform, which allows us to create content once to publish anywhere. We're focused on working with *Seventeen* and our design group – which is made up of *House Beautiful*, *Elle Décor*, and *Veranda* – to streamline their workflows and configure the style sheets to be able to tag content. This will determine how and where it flows, and into what devices and delivery mediums, resulting in channel-agnostic content.

In the past, we have been print-centric, and we have to adapt for whatever channel or device will display our content. This process is decoupling the content from the presentation layer so it can flow to an iPhone app or iPad, and the Web, as well as to print.

What impact will this have?

It's taking away the manual effort on the back end, so we're doing the work upstream with design and tagging. We also enhance our content through enrichment engines, which do keyword tagging and metadata, so we're not doing that downstream.

This allows us to create and produce a lot more content with our existing staff.

Do your people understand the impact and the value of this?

Yes. For instance, we put a workflow in place that allows us to produce 120 digital magazines a month with the addition of just one production person.

How important is it to have metrics to track return in this area?

We are in the process of implementing a digital asset management system that allows us to measure productivity, use of assets, and ROI. It also makes it possible to create new products very quickly, which is the biggest reason for doing this.

What will things look like three to five years out?

As far as content workflow, it will be dramatically different. It's all about moving the work from downstream to upstream, which is changing the way content is created. It's a mindset and cultural change.

It's also about showing our people that this technology will be to their benefit, will produce more content, and will make their brands more profitable. ●

Reinventing BAZAAR's Future

An Interview with Carol A. Smith,
Vice President, Publisher, and Chief Revenue Officer, Harper's BAZAAR



Carol A. Smith

EDITORS' NOTE Carol Smith was appointed to her current post in May 2011. Prior to her arrival at BAZAAR, she was Chief Brand Officer of the ELLE Group at Hachette Filipacchi Media. A founding publisher of *Parenting*, acquired by Time Inc., Smith was appointed president and CEO in 1993. While at Time Inc., Smith was also the founding publisher of *Vibe*, and served on the launch team for Martha Stewart Living. Earlier in her career, Smith was publisher of *American Heritage*, and co-founder of *American Photographer*. She helped launch e-commerce Web sites *beautyjungle.com* and *estyle.com*. She is a graduate of George Washington University.

COMPANY BRIEF Available in 43 countries around the globe, Harper's BAZAAR (www.harperbazaar.com) is a visual muse and a source of ownable style—turning the unexpected into the coveted. Since its inception in 1867 as America's first fashion magazine, BAZAAR has showcased such extraordinary talents as Richard Avedon and Andy Warhol, and the tradition continues today with world-class photographers and creative collaborations with artists and auteurs from Takashi Murakami to Martin Scorsese.

What was your vision for the magazine when you came in?

I knew *Harper's BAZAAR* was a magazine for serious fashion, and it had a nice feel of timelessness to it, but I truly fell in love with BAZAAR when I started reading its history.

I felt it was important to cherish the magazine's past while reinventing it for the future. We had to push ourselves to the top of the fashion magazine pyramid, and BAZAAR needed to be more luxurious, while also being effortlessly chic and modern. So we changed the product – the look and the feel – to create a new reader experience. But we also drew on the traditions of our past to make the magazine fresher without losing that timeless appeal.

Has the profile of the reader changed?

Not dramatically. We raised the price on newsstands because we know the discerning woman we want, who is affluent and sophisticated, is not driven off by price increases.

What is the vision behind ShopBAZAAR?

It was born out of a need for me to stop tearing pages out of magazines and putting them in my bag only to lose them or get to the store right after the item sold out. I felt there had to be a way to connect a fashion magazine like BAZAAR to a shopping experience. It hasn't been easy to launch a new e-commerce product and organically integrate it into the magazine. But I'm happy to say it's working, and it has significantly changed the conversation about BAZAAR.

How do you remain relevant in print with the drive towards digital?

I feel so lucky to be in the fashion category, because a printed fashion magazine will always be relevant, and will always be a starting point. There is a pleasure and immediacy in holding a magazine and looking at a magnificent photo portfolio that nothing in the electronic media can quite equal.

That said, women can experience BAZAAR on Bazaar.com and at our pop-up shops, as well as by sitting in their living rooms reading our magazine.

I feel very strongly that BAZAAR is a whole ecosystem, and the separate parts have to nourish each other. I believe the system is working well right now. BAZAAR has never been better or bolder, and our advertisers respond to that.

We've figured out our vision and our mission, and now we're focused on the future. ●