

The Responsibility of News

An Interview with Cesar Conde, Chairman, NBCUniversal News Group

EDITORS' NOTE Cesar Conde was named Chairman of the NBCUniversal News Group in May 2020. In this role, he has oversight of NBC News, MSNBC, and CNBC, including editorial and business operations for the award-winning television and digital properties. Previously, Conde was Chairman of NBCUniversal International Group and NBCUniversal Telemundo Enterprises. Conde joined NBCUniversal in October 2013 as Executive Vice President



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to oversee NBCU International and NBCU Digital Enterprises. Before NBCUniversal, Conde was the President of Univision Networks and served in a variety of senior executive capacities at the company. Prior to Univision, Conde served as a White House Fellow for Secretary of State Colin L. Powell from 2002–2003. Previously, he worked at StarMedia Network, the first Internet company focused on Spanish and Portuguese-speaking audiences globally, and in the Mergers & Acquisitions Group at Salomon Smith Barney. Conde serves on the board of directors of Walmart and PepsiCo. He is a Trustee of the Aspen Institute and the Paley Center for Media. He is a Full Member at the Council on Foreign Relations and a Young Global Leader for the World Economic Forum. He holds a BA with honors from Harvard University and an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

COMPANY BRIEF NBCUniversal (nbcuniversal.com) is one of the world's leading media and entertainment companies in the development, production, and marketing of entertainment, news and information to a global audience. It owns and operates a valuable portfolio of news and entertainment television networks, a premier motion picture company, significant television production operations, a leading television stations group, world-renowned theme parks, and a suite of leading Internet-based businesses. NBCUniversal is a subsidiary of Comcast Corporation.

How do you define resilience and what do you see as the importance of resilience in addressing the crises the world is facing today?

Our country is facing a health crisis that in turn brought on an economic crisis, and recently an escalation of social unrest in many American cities ignited by injustice. Any one of these events on its own would be difficult for anyone, or any company. It all adds up to a time that demonstrates just how important resilience is, now more than ever.

Change has always been inevitable. Resilience is not being resistant to change, it's embracing it. It's figuring out what's to come. Resilience is fueled by, as I have witnessed in my new role with the

NBCUniversal News Group, courage, professionalism and teamwork. I have full confidence in our collective ability to identify the best path forward and our willingness to be flexible enough to change course and learn from the experiences when we get something wrong. This too is resilience.

“Our most sacred responsibility at NBCU News Group is to inform and equip our audiences with relevant news and facts.”

How are you thinking about diversity, equity and inclusion within your workplace?

We are at a pivotal moment in our country's history. Over the past several months we've all witnessed our nation grapple with systemic inequality, economic instability and protests against racial injustice – all amid the chaos and impact of a global health crisis. And now, a pivotal Election Day is around the corner. These are complex stories that we as a news organization have a unique privilege of covering during these challenging times. The role of journalists, especially journalists of color, is more vital than ever, and we must reflect the communities we serve.

How critical is it for NBCUniversal News Group to build a diverse and inclusive workforce?

We're a future-focused organization and the demographics of our country show that for the first time in our country's history, this year in 2020, Americans under the age of 18 will be 50+ percent of color. It is projected that by 2040, over 50 percent of all Americans will be people of color. This is where America is headed, and we are meeting the moment with an aggressive plan.

We recently announced what we're calling the “Fifty Percent Challenge Initiative” which set an ambitious goal for us to have 50 percent of our employees be women, and 50 percent be people of color. As a news organization, we have had to ensure that we reflect more diverse perspectives both on and off air, not only because it makes our coverage stronger, but because we have an obligation to the communities we serve.

How do you define the NBCUniversal News Group difference and what have been the keys to its success?

We have the unique ability to bring together so many powerful voices and brands under one company from NBC News to MSNBC to CNBC to Telemundo News. The breadth of expertise, the diversity of our teams and the steadfast nature of our mission strengthen us and set us apart from the competition, while also ensuring that we reach every member of our community through all platforms available to them. I do not believe there's any other news organization that can cover all of these events as well as our networks with the depth, expertise and humanity that our journalists bring to it.

How do you define the responsibility that news programs have to the public?

Early in my career I fell in love with media and the positive impact it could have if practiced responsibly. I've had the privilege of working in the media industry for over 15 years in various capacities and overseeing various news organizations among other things for much of that time. I have profound admiration and respect for the important work that is done by journalists.

Our most sacred responsibility at NBCU News Group is to inform and equip our audiences with relevant news and facts. Our news organization is the backbone of our business and oftentimes a lifeline to the communities that we serve. I cannot think of a more important moment in our lifetime where the work our journalists do has more of an impact than today. News programs should be trustworthy, serve all of the communities that make up their broad audience, and should look like the communities they serve. ●