

## A Company of Doers

An Interview with Rene Jones, Partner and Chief of Social Impact, United Talent Agency (UTA)

**EDITORS' NOTE** During her 19-year tenure at UTA, Rene Jones launched the UTA Foundation in an effort to reinforce the company's commitment to prioritizing social impact and inclusion for employees and clients and became the first female non-agent partner at the company. Jones has also played a central role in shaping UTA's employee culture. Jones and her team oversee the agency's Social Impact practice. Annually, the team provides guidance to more than 300 clients and their organizations as they navigate their philanthropic and charitable interests. Prior to UTA, Jones began her career working for social justice organizations and was an original member of the pilot program for National Service that led to the formation of AmeriCorps. She worked on Capitol Hill for Senator Barbara Boxer and worked on many other high-profile campaigns for women and people of color across the country.



Rene Jones

as much work as a typical volunteer group. Everyone is so focused and committed to making a difference.

### Will you provide an overview of your role and areas of focus?

As a Partner and Chief of Social Impact, I established and oversee the UTA Foundation, which provides charitable engagement opportunities for our global network of employees and clients.

Our Project Mentor program works with community organizations where we operate to connect agents from across UTA – music, film, television and beyond – to inspire the next generation of creatives to pursue careers in entertainment. We are particularly focused on recruiting young people from diverse backgrounds to help build a more inclusive industry. UTA Green champions climate, sustainability and environmental justice by supporting initiatives from volunteering to educational forums to working with clients to

raise public awareness. Our Civics pillar focuses on non-partisan issues of civic engagement and voting, working to encourage full participation in our democracy. In terms of our clients, the causes they are interested in are as diverse as the creatives themselves, so we work with them on an individual basis to identify opportunities that connect with them personally.

### How is corporate social responsibility ingrained in UTA's mission and purpose?

The UTA Foundation was established in 2004 when we were a company of 250 people. I was the fourth executive hire behind the CFO and heads of HR and Corporate Communications. So, the company has long prioritized social impact at the highest levels. And, as we continue to grow, we keep expanding that commitment. We now have a team that helps manage our community outreach in each of our offices – Los Angeles, New York, Nashville, Atlanta and London. Every employee knows community engagement is central to our DNA. One of the most meaningful days of the year is Project Impact, an annual

**COMPANY BRIEF** UTA ([unitedtalent.com](http://unitedtalent.com)) unites ideas, opportunities, and talent. The company represents some of the world's most iconic, barrier-breaking artists, creators and changemakers – from actors, athletes and musicians to writers, gamers and digital influencers. One of the most influential companies in global entertainment, UTA's business spans talent representation, content production, as well as strategic advisory and marketing work with some of the world's biggest brands. Affiliated companies include Digital Brand Architects, KLUTCH Sports Group, Curtis Brown Group, and MediaLink. UTA is headquartered in Los Angeles with offices in Atlanta, Chicago, Nashville, New York, and London.

### How do you describe United Talent Agency's culture and values?

UTA has a robust culture of giving back to our local communities and a strong commitment to social and racial justice. The best part of working here is the company is made up of doers. An agent's job is to turn a no into a yes, and I'm proud to say they flex this muscle for social good, as well. When the foundation team reaches out for agents and executives to participate in our mentoring program, the answer is always yes. When it comes to hands-on volunteering, the running joke is UTA needs twice



UTA Foundation renovated a Central American school in partnership with Glasswing International

agency-wide volunteer day when the company shuts down from Los Angeles to London and employees fan out to volunteer opportunities throughout their communities.

Community engagement is very important at UTA. For example, here in LA, helping the unhoused is a huge priority, and our veterans in particular deserve permanent, supportive housing. I'm proud to serve on the national board for U.S.VETS, which is involved in creating the largest site of supportive veteran housing in the nation with over 1,800 residents in West LA. From our CEO leading a major capital-raising campaign to UTA delivering volunteers, we have been heavily involved in making this site a reality.

**How does UTA guide its high-profile clients on their social impact strategies?**

These are highly customized strategies that are unique to each client and their personal interests and passions. When a client is looking to align with an issue, it's important to think big picture. We aren't here to help with a photo op, but to look out across the nonprofit landscape and help identify the right organization for each client. We always say it is a marathon, not a sprint. Take the time to learn about a cause, then utilize your platform to help bring light to an issue and encourage others to get involved. The opportunities are virtually limitless, and so are the ways to engage – from being a global ambassador for a humanitarian organization to encouraging a climate-related storyline in a project they're working on to showing up and speaking out at important moments. Creative people are passionate people. It is inspiring to help them find meaningful ways to use their platform to make a difference on issues they care about.

**Do you feel there are strong opportunities for women to grow and lead in the industry?**

The entertainment industry still has a way to go in terms of inclusive executive leadership across the board, but we have made real strides at UTA. I am proud to be the first female corporate executive to become a UTA partner and thrilled that many more have been promoted since. Shattering glass ceilings for women has always been a central focus for me, from my early days as an AmeriCorps volunteer, a Senate staffer and in the nonprofit world. Promoting women's leadership helps everyone – and throughout my career I've stayed involved with personally supporting nonprofits like the International Women's Media Foundation, Vital Voices, and GirlUp, to name a few.

**You have spent almost 20 years at UTA. What has made the experience so special for you?**

It has been an incredible opportunity to establish a division within a supportive and fast-growing company that has been successful both as a business and as a dedicated member of their community. I feel lucky every day to show up, work with a dynamic team and have the opportunity to tackle some of the most pressing problems of our time. It is truly an honor to have a dream job, and we look forward to celebrating the 20th anniversary of the UTA Foundation next year. ●



*After the devastation of Hurricane Harvey, the UTA Foundation traveled to Houston with a team of agents to help create affordable housing with Habitat for Humanity (above)*



*Jones is a strong advocate for the environment through UTA Green and sitting on the board of OneGreenThing and CAL Volunteers Commission Climate Action Corps*