

# It Starts with Values

An Interview with Philippe Dauman,  
President and Chief Executive Officer, Viacom Inc.

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Philippe Dauman was Co-Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of DND Capital Partners, L.L.C. from May 2000 until September 2006. Prior to co-founding DND Capital Partners, Dauman served in several positions at Viacom, including as Deputy Chairman and Executive Vice President. He is a director of National Amusements, Inc.; Lafarge S.A.; and the KIPP Foundation, as well as a member of the Academy of Motion*



Philippe Dauman

*Picture Arts and Sciences and the Business Roundtable, and Vice Chair of the Partnership for New York City. He serves on the Executive Committee of the NCTA, the Board of Trustees for The Paley Center for Media and the North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System, the Executive Committee of Lenox Hill Hospital, and the Board of Trustees and Dean's Council of Columbia University Law School.*

**COMPANY BRIEF** *With more than 160 media networks, Viacom (www.viacom.com) is a leading global entertainment company delivering content to its audiences via television, motion pictures, and a wide range of digital media. Viacom's brands include MTV, VH1, CMT, Logo, BET, Centric, Nickelodeon, Nick Jr., TeenNick, Nick at Nite, Comedy Central, TV Land, Spike TV, and Tr3s. and Paramount Pictures, which celebrates its 100th year in 2012 and is America's oldest film studio, continuing today as a global producer and distributor of filmed entertainment.*

**How critical is it to drive community engagement as part of the culture of Viacom and how do you define those efforts?**

Doing good is a fundamental part of our culture and has been for as long as we've been in existence. Our COO and I just completed a series of leadership meetings that were held over a period of more than a year – we got together with a group of our leaders for a full day to go through our core values and leadership attributes. Among them is good citizenship and doing good, which define what our company is all about and are also important attributes of a good leader.

In our meetings and town halls, I also emphasize the special responsibility we have as a media company, and even more so as a globally

active company that has particular resonance with young people. We have the ability to influence our audiences, who are engaged and strongly connected to our brands.

As a result, we have a unique opportunity to engage with them on important social issues and to encourage them to take action. We are all invested in this mission, which, I believe is one of the reasons we attract and retain great people. The young people – the Millennial Generation – that we cater to and now employ want to

make a difference in the world and we're seeing higher levels of participation in our community initiatives because of them. On Viacomcommunity Day, which we've done every year for more than two decades, every employee around the world is given a day off to volunteer with different charitable organizations in their communities. This year, we saw record levels of reach and participation around the world.

**Is it important that the charitable initiatives you support tie into your business strategy or should they be kept separate?**

The key point of engagement for us is to use the power of our reach and influence as a global media company. We're leveraging our business relationships to create excellent work and to do good for our communities – and all of our stakeholders benefit – employees, audiences and business partners.

There are several prongs to what we do and several strategic areas of focus, including education, health and wellness, citizenship, and the environment. Supporting education, for example, helps to ensure the competitiveness of future generations and a stronger workforce. We started working on the Get Schooled initiative with the Gates Foundation, the success of which eventually led to the creation of Get Schooled as a separate foundation. The nonprofit organization utilizes media, technology, and popular culture to improve high school graduation and college success rates.

To ensure our employees were as passionate about the initiative as we were, we ran panels and seminars in New York and L.A. so our people could hear the issues firsthand. The Gates Foundation recognized that we are as good at reaching people as they are at innovative programming, so it was a perfect partnership. The effort's growth stems from its grassroots nature

and the leveraging of both of our strengths, as any effective business relationship does.

We've had many varied initiatives that ended up reaching far beyond the company, such as our Get Connected mentoring program. As a result of our experience we created "Mentor in a Box" to share what we learned with other companies. There had previously been no road map for setting up a mentorship program in a company. Education is a personal passion of mine and as part of Get Connected, I took on a mentee who I've been working with for a year and a half.

**With most of these efforts, do you look to collaborate or partner?**

We have found that collaboration with other organizations that have relevant expertise is a very powerful approach. With our mentoring program, we researched the best mentoring organization that could help us. In education, we've partnered with the Gates Foundation.

We look for practical programs that have the potential for meaningful outcomes and partnerships that make sense. In this area, as in business, there should be accountability. So we strive to have measureable objectives, which can inform our strategy and further our initiatives.

**Is it possible to establish metrics to track the impact of these efforts?**

Yes. For example, on Get Schooled, we had an attendance challenge that involved 100 high schools around the country and 250,000 students. Through the work of the Gates Foundation, we found that there is a direct correlation among high school attendance, high school graduation rates, and college attendance. The challenge was to improve attendance for the chance to meet a celebrity in person and have them perform at your school.

Attendance went up in all the participating schools, even those that didn't win, and you can measure that. For those that didn't win, we had celebrities record phone messages, which students could sign up for online to receive in the morning. As an entertainment company, we have that ability to partner with celebrities and many are interested in helping.

We also try to sustain these programs and extend their benefits. For example, the Get Schooled effort is a multi-year plan that is measured as it progresses. Health care has been a global initiative we have played a major role in for over 20 years. Through outreach

and education, initiatives like the MTV Staying Alive Foundation and BET's Rap-It-Up have increased HIV/AIDS awareness around the world and affected millions. In 2011 alone, MTV Staying Alive Foundation grantees reached over half a million young people. For the past eight years, on Nickelodeon's Worldwide Day of Play, Nick goes dark for three hours to encourage kids to get active. Over the summer, the network motivated kids to complete more than 3,300,000 health and wellness actions. These are just a few of the major issues that have been the subject of sustained effort over a number of years.

**What have you done to focus on the environment?**

Again, a lot of our programs bubble up from the passion and efforts of our employees at the grassroots level. Individual brands have championed environmental efforts in their own way, speaking to audiences through their signature styles and personalities. For example, Comedy Central educates viewers on practical eco-friendly behaviors in its distinctly witty voice. Sustainability is a major cause within the company that resonates with audiences around



the world. Internally, we strive to green our business practices through our Green Room for recycling supplies, e-waste and cell phone recycling programs and green volunteering initiatives. Paramount's Rideshare program, an initiative within the "Green. It's Paramount to Us." umbrella, allows employees to search and find Rideshare partners in the company, offers commuter planning resources, and provides incentives for participation.

**How does having the ability to reach so many people create a different platform than other companies in this space?**

Connecting people is what we do here – across all of our screens and around the world, we reach people directly, and bring them together around content and ideas. In some cases, we weave messages and themes into our shows and air targeted public service announcements. Some of the most creative minds in the business are hard at work developing programming, Web sites and applications within these walls. For instance, MTV launched the "My College Dollars" app with Get Schooled and The College Board, to connect students to eligible scholarships based on their Facebook profile data and provide information on getting financing for college.

**You also publish a corporate responsibility report.**

Yes, I want this company to be thought of as the best place to work and as a company that people respect. Respect for an individual or a company is about something more than the bottom line; it's about forging relationships with our consumers and working to address the issues that are most important to them. Our CSR report highlights all the initiatives underway throughout Viacom, providing measurable data and concrete results.

**Even though many CEOs of leading corporations put a major emphasis on giving back, public perception of them is not always favorable. Does that ever frustrate you?**

Regardless of public perception, you have to do what is right, which in addition to doing good, means doing the best you can in a difficult economy to run a successful enterprise. This way, you are creating jobs and giving people the wherewithal to support their families and do good on their own.

I've been involved with this company for 25 years and our commitment to being socially responsible is a part of our culture, which predates even my getting involved with the company. We have gotten better at our social responsibility efforts just as we've gotten better at operating our business, getting more employees involved and expanding to more places throughout the world.

This commitment ties the company together. Again, our extraordinary worldwide Viacomcommunity Day is a perfect example. We all get to spend time with old colleagues, meet new ones, and together discover community organizations with which to get involved. Employees can go online and see pictures of themselves and others participating – we even create a video about it every year.

**Viacom consistently innovates and leads in different segments. What makes the company so special?**

It comes from our creativity and integrity. In any organization, whether it's government, corporate, or nonprofit, you start with values. You have to decide what your values are and those have to be values that are shared by the organization, its partners, and other stakeholders.

Viacom is fundamentally a creative organization. We are 100 percent about content and brands, and about entertaining people. So the question becomes: What do you need to succeed? We have to be creative and innovative – adapting to a world and technology that is constantly changing. And we need a lot of teamwork – people working together to make a TV program or a movie and, increasingly, making sure that content can succeed in a digital environment across multiple screens.

In the end, it's those attributes and the concentration of all the values we have as a corporate organization that makes us successful at what we do. ●

*Viacom sponsored community activities: Clean up of Zojoji Temple in Tokyo, Japan for Viacomcommunity Day 2011 (above); an outline of Viacom's charitable activities (right)*

