

# Hearst Magazines' David Carey To Samir "Mr. Magazine™" Husni: The Magazine Cup Is More Than Half Full...

Hearst Magazines' Success Kicks Print Into High Gear & Proves This Is No Time To Stop Believing In Ink On Paper – The Mr. Magazine™ Interview With David Carey, President, [Hearst Magazines](#)



“The print is dead movement was, I think, largely led by newspaper journalists who were maybe feeling in their own newsrooms what was going on and they were extending it to any traditional form. I think what’s happened is every sector of media, literally every sector, is in a period of enormous disruption and I think that has

put the magazine industry in context, and I guess that we look at disruption as opportunity. People will succeed and make money from disruption and people will find themselves challenged and we want to obviously be in the former.” David Carey

On a recent trip to New York to present [Mr. Magazine's™](#) and [min's 30 Hottest Magazine Launches of the Past 30 Years](#), David Carey, president of Hearst Magazines, took a few minutes out of his busy day to talk to me about the company's continued belief and success in print and the accomplishments they've achieved with combined partnerships with other media platforms and businesses. I met David at his office on the 43rd floor of

the Hearst Tower in New York City.

David is a man who runs Hearst Magazines with a clear focus and gives all credit to the spectacular teams that he works with and their creative ideas and executions. From the recent partnership with Verizon, which he gives total credit to Neeraj Khemlani, who is co-president of Hearst's entertainment division, to the first-ever joint venture with Snapchat, which David praises Joanna Coles for leading, he knows the value of a great partnership, and great teams.

While other companies are trimming and stifling new print magazine launches, Hearst is putting their best print foot forward and proving that ink on paper can not only survive in this digital age, but flourish as well. And along with Hearst's outstanding digital platforms, the company intertwines print and pixels in a way that promotes and propels both platforms successfully into the future.

So, I hope you enjoy this extremely positive and interesting interview with a man who has proven that he knows how to lead with strength and vision in an age where print and pixels merge and the power of both are celebrated; the Mr. Magazine™ interview with David Carey, President, Hearst Magazines.

**But first, the Mr. Magazine™ Video Minute with David Carey followed by the sound-bites:**

**And now for the sound-bites:**

**On Hearst's secret sauce that keeps them growing and flourishing with new launches and bigger and better-quality magazines:** Well, the credit goes to the team. One of the lines that I use with the team is if you don't like change; you'll like relevance even less. The industry continues to need to evolve what it does and how it accomplishes its goals. And the Hearst team does a great job with that. And then on our

digital operations to figure out that scale has to be our friend, that we have too much self-inflicted complexity, that the only way to make digital work is to have a giant, global content ecosystem, where content gets to travel across brand and across geography without permission, friction or cost.

**On Hearst's partnerships and whether they're still a viable opinion:** Yes, we're talking about partners all of the time. We generally prefer the partnership model, because we do believe when two companies contribute financial resources and management talent, promotional platforms that you can use and significantly boost your chances of success. So, partnership is our preferred course.

**On why he thinks it took the magazine and magazine media world seven years to discover that print was neither dead nor dying:** The print is dead movement was, I think, largely led by newspaper journalists who were maybe feeling in their own newsrooms what was going on and they were extending it to any traditional form. I think what's happened is every sector of media, literally every sector, is in a period of enormous disruption and I think that has put the magazine industry in context, and I guess that we look at disruption as opportunity. People will succeed and make money from disruption and people will find themselves challenged and we want to obviously be in the former.

**On whether he ever envisioned that Hearst Magazines would be where it is today when he assumed the position of president:** I knew going in that we had things that were uniquely suited to Hearst; we have a parent company of remarkable strength. The corporation, because of what Frank Bennack built and now his transition to Steve Swartz, you have a company, unlike other media companies that perhaps you could imagine threats to their existence; Hearst is the opposite of that. From our entertainment division assets, to our business media assets, to 30 local TV stations, which do exceedingly well in political years; and our newspaper division that has seen

growth and profits now four years in a row, there's that can-do spirit that's part of what we do as well as the financial ability to invest.

**On Hearst's partnerships with entities such as Complex and Vice:** Those are with our entertainment division as you know. This news relationship with Verizon that we have is a very important one. We've formed this Verizon relationship that's going to be programming content for the Go90 platform and then Verizon came into our Awesomeness business, not just ours; it's owned 51% by DreamWorks and 49% between Hearst and Verizon, so for Hearst to now have this relationship with Verizon is fantastic, given their power. The credit goes to Neeraj Khemlani, who is co-president of our entertainment division and did a brilliant job on that. We haven't worked so closely with Complex yet, but we've had ideas with Vice and have been discussing different things that we can do together.

**On how he decides which partnerships to accept:** We take everything seriously. But there are a couple of important considerations. The first is; we do spend a lot of time early on in a chemistry check, because we know these partnerships ideally last for a very long time and the signing of the deal is the easiest, least stressful piece, right? We do spend a fair amount of time making sure that it feels like we have a good relationship with the partner, because that's just like the people who are your closest associates in the world. So, there's a good chemistry period.

**On the hardest decision he's made since becoming president of Hearst Magazines:** We make a lot of decisions; we're always rethinking flows and structures and what people do and how they do it. And you deal with human beings and some are great with change and others are not so good with it. And we're a culture that's sensitive to people and we balance implementing, at times, disruptive actions with respect for the individual.

**On what someone would find him doing if they showed up unexpectedly at his home one evening:** I spend a lot of time reading our magazines; there are all sorts of interesting and thoughtful analyses of trends across the world. I do very much believe in interdisciplinary thinking, that the answers to some business problems are found by looking at other industries, not just our own. So, I like to consume as much as I can.

**On the next big thing coming up with Hearst Magazines:** I think that we're at it every day. We run in spurts as I mentioned to you. We have big initiatives and they all come in kind of when they're ready. But our teams are thinking about how to advance and evolve other businesses every day.

And now the lightly edited transcript of the Mr. Magazine™ interview with David Carey, President of Hearst Magazines.



**Samir Husni:** What is your secret recipe when it comes to Hearst magazines? You're still launching new magazines; you're not firing people en masse; you've upsized all of your magazines; almost every magazine in the portfolio is bigger and on better paper. What is the secret sauce that other companies aren't finding?

**David Carey:** It's simple. A: we step on no cracks when we walk down the street and we sleep under a pyramid at night. (Laughs) People have not realized the mystical powers of these forces.

**Samir Husni:** (Laughs too).

David Carey: Well, the credit goes to the team. One of the lines that I use with the team is if you don't like change; you'll like relevance even less. The industry continues to need to evolve what it does and how it accomplishes its goals. And the Hearst team does a great job with that. So, whether we are looking at our print businesses in terms of what's the right way to produce our products and the creation of the Hearst Design Group led by your alum, Mr. Newell Turner, and bringing three teams together into one big team to produce three different products, running against the traditional standards of the business and those businesses today are not only economically healthy, but gave us the confidence to do a pilot issue of Metropolitan Home, a great mark that we acquired, it was defunct, with the Lagardère acquisition and a chance to bring it back.

And so we're always kind of thinking differently. Recently we made the move to have Jay Fielden not only continue to oversee Town & Country as editorial director, but also be the day-to-day editor in chief of Esquire. Jay is a real talent; he did a fantastic job at Town & Country.

So, we stretch our teams and we stretch our thinking.

And then on our digital operations to figure out that scale has to be our friend, that we have too much self-inflicted complexity, that the only way to make digital work is to have a giant, global content ecosystem, where content gets to travel across brand and across geography without permission, friction or cost. And that was one of the most disruptive decisions we made, over the course of my career, but one of the biggest, because the profit growth that we've had from digital has allowed us to make our numbers and has taken pressure off of the organization. So, that has allowed us to avoid a large staff restructure and so on, because we've met our numbers for our U.S. business, largely by taking business model risks that have paid off. But our teams have implemented brilliantly.

**Samir Husni:** The word on the streets is you're not only launching new magazines, you're bringing back magazines from the dead and putting them back into print, such as the case with Metropolitan Home. And this is the first major test where you didn't partner with someone else, such as with the last three or four magazines that you launched. Is there still talk about other partnerships?

David Carey: Yes, we're talking about partners all of the time. We generally prefer the partnership model, because we do believe when two companies contribute financial resources and management talent, promotional platforms that you can use and significantly boost your chances of success. So, partnership is our preferred course.

But in this particular case, we had the mark and Newell had a vision for it. And we were able to officially produce it out of the Hearst Design infrastructure. The way this worked was different, we didn't need to assemble a team and hire a bunch of people. We managed to fit it in within the workflow, both sales and editorial, of the existing population of managers. And so it was a different model. This group found that they could stretch even beyond Elle Décor, Veranda and House Beautiful. It made sense because we had a mark, Metropolitan Home, for many people they still remember it fondly. And this is our way to kind of test that reservoir of good will that hopefully exists for the brand.

This was driven by Newell. He came to us with this plan, had a vision for it, believed that we could do it in a way that made sense financially and we like to empower our managers. And our discussion with Newell was to go for it.

**Samir Husni:** One thing that I've noticed this year in following magazine media and the marketplace, no one is saying that print is dead anymore. That mantra has vanished. Why did it take us seven years to discover that print is neither dead nor dying?

David Carey: The print is dead movement was, I think, largely led by newspaper journalists who were maybe feeling in their own newsrooms what was going on and they were extending it to any traditional form.

I think what's happened is that the rest of the world has been caught up in this absolute state of chaos. And suddenly, magazines don't seem as chaotic. The cable TV business seems incredibly chaotic. Parts of the digital business, you have Yahoo, one of the big players, looking at revenue declines of 15% per year, and all the disruption there.

I think what's happened is every sector of media, literally every sector, is in a period of enormous disruption and I think that has put the magazine industry in context, and I guess that we look at disruption as opportunity. People will succeed and make money from disruption and people will find themselves challenged and we want to obviously be in the former.

It's been important for those that long-thought certain industries had a get-out-of-jail-free card forever and that proved not to be true. I believe that has changed the thinking around magazines, and for the good. We always believed it, of course. People would look at other things as sure bets and the good news is that there are no moats around any business, no matter how large, that business is available and it's up to you to determine whether you're going to succeed or fail. I don't care if you operate a digital company, a television network, or a magazine company.

**Samir Husni: In 2010, did you envision that Hearst Magazines would be where they are now when you assumed the position of president?**

David Carey: I knew going in that we had things that were uniquely suited to Hearst; we have a parent company of remarkable strength. The corporation, because of what Frank



Bennack built and now his transition to Steve Swartz, you have a company, unlike other media companies that perhaps you could imagine threats to their existence; Hearst is the opposite of that. From our entertainment division assets, to our business media assets, to 30 local TV stations, which do exceedingly well in political years; and our newspaper division that has seen growth and profits now four years in a row, there's that can-do spirit that's part of what we do as well as the financial ability to invest.

I knew we had a team that knew how to innovate and not take everything they do too seriously. And I think at the same time we've pushed that hard against the conventional thinking, or in some cases the disruption that has impacted some of the other companies in the industry,

I'm proud of where we are, but I do believe that we can go much further. I give our team high marks that we have still a lot more to get done and a lot more to accomplish.

**Samir Husni: How much are you going to push those new partnerships, whether it's with Complex or Vice or other entities? Are you going to bring them into the fold or is it as you were reported in the New York Observer and also told me: "you wake up at night and think about these things?"**

David Carey: Those are with our entertainment division as you know. This news relationship with Verizon that we have is a very important one. We've formed this Verizon relationship that's going to be programming content for the Go90 platform and then Verizon came into our Awesomeness business, not just ours; it's owned 51% by DreamWorks and 49% between Hearst and Verizon, so for Hearst to now have this relationship with Verizon is fantastic, given their power. The credit goes to Neeraj Khemlani, who is co-president of our entertainment division and did a brilliant job on that. We haven't worked so closely with Complex yet, but we've had ideas with Vice and have been discussing different things that we can do together.

We get a lot of people who knock on our door and want to co-create media with us, in what used to be only print, but now in other interesting incarnations. In digital of course, in the fall we created the new digital business with Lena Dunham around the "Lenny Letter," which was a very successful newsletter with a clear, concise voice. We've created a new digital business and partnership with Lena and her production partner.

Of course, we also did our new joint venture with Snapchat, their first ever joint venture was with Hearst. Joanna Coles did a great job leading that. We announced our relationship with Condé Nast, so this is just in a few months, and then with Verizon.

In just a four or five month period, we've partnered with Condé Nast and Verizon and Snapchat and Lena Dunham. We've been thinking about these pop-up magazine concepts for some time. And many people come to us because they've seen the great success of Oprah or Food Network and some of them have good brand recognition, but maybe not in terms of promotional resources, a real big company behind them. So, we've been thinking about what to do.

What we first did with Carine Roitfeld and Harper's Bazaar, as you know, four times per year she publishes this brilliant portfolio that runs across every edition of Harper's Bazaar globally in the same month. And no one does that, right, simultaneous global content creations. We're trying something different on that.

And what we're going to do with Linda Wells in the fall, and of course, Linda is the highly-respected, long time editor of Allure, we're building internally is the Wells Report and we'll see what the final title will be, but it will be a content play that will run across Elle and Marie Claire, Town & Country and Harper's Bazaar, partial circulation and you take a concept that would reach a slice of those audiences,

and we have a lot of those individuals who approached us, that could work as a pop-up magazine, maybe not work as their own dedicated franchise, but could very much work as a horizontal content play.

So, we're piloting the Linda Wells project with great hope and we have others behind it. Since we did the Lena Dunham deal with "Lenny," we've had many others who are successful, content names in their own right, approach us to do something similar. Our hope is that we can do a couple of these a year. We could probably do more if we want to respond to all of the inbound queries, but we want to execute each one well. That's why when we talk print, we do it in an every two-to-three-year cycle, because we want to make sure that we can really focus and do it right and then move on to the next one.

**Samir Husni: What do you use as a filter? I'm sure you're bombarded by people who want to partner and who want to do a pop-up magazine. What's the filter; which ones make it to David's desk?**

David Carey: We take everything seriously. But there are a couple of important considerations. The first is, we do spend a lot of time early on in a chemistry check, because we know these partnerships ideally last for a very long time and the signing of the deal is the easiest, least stressful piece, right? We do spend a fair amount of time making sure that it feels like we have a good relationship with the partner, because that's just like the people who are your closest associates in the world. So, there's a good chemistry period.

And then we do research and we test to see if the concept will be able to grow and be able to command an audience and drive advertising. But I would say one of the most important considerations is; are these people who we're going to spend a lot of time with, ones that we can problem solve with? You hope problems never come, but they do come. As a result, there are projects that I won't name; two projects in the last two

years that came up that I thought were really, highly promising businesses, but we weren't so sure the partnership was going to be strong and we passed on something that we thought could have been successful, but might have been choppy midway through because we didn't have good alignment with the partner.

Those are the decisions that I make with Michael and Ellen. Those are hard decisions, to walk away from something that might have been a good business, but the partner has some questions. But we have to do that.

**Samir Husni: For an outsider, people look at you and at what you're doing and think: wow, David's life at Hearst has been nothing but a rose garden. But what has been the most challenging time you've had?**

David Carey: Part of our day, every day is filled with the good stuff and part of our day is filled with the tough, operating decisions and problems that you get around the world and that you have to manage.

**Samir Husni: What has been the hardest decision that you've made since you became president of Hearst Magazines?**

David Carey: We make a lot of decisions; we're always rethinking flows and structures and what people do and how they do it. And you deal with human beings and some are great with change and others are not so good with it. And we're a culture that's sensitive to people and we balance implementing, at times, disruptive actions with respect for the individual.

It wasn't a hard decision. The implementation of Pub Works is filled with complexity and opportunity. I do believe at my core that this is a significant advancement for the entire industry, not just these two companies. But we have a lot to do between now and then. You can't be afraid.

The age-old question, and people have different personal characteristics; the age-old question that people always ask is: what keeps you up at night. And I don't like that question. The reality is nothing. I sleep well every single night and I always have. And maybe I'm fortunate that that's me, because we have all sorts of issues, things that go right and things that go wrong. You wake up the next day and you try to solve them again. And we'll solve a bunch of them, but we won't solve them all.

**Samir Husni: So, rather than me asking you my typical last question about what keeps you up at night; if I showed up unexpectedly to your home one evening, what would I find you doing; reading a magazine; your iPad; watching television; or something different?**

David Carey: People have different media consumption habits; this is not a statement which some people make because they try to come off as intellectuals, but I really don't watch TV; when you don't watch TV you have a lot of extra time on your hands, a lot of extra time.

I watch maybe two or three hours per week of TV, maybe. So, that gives me a lot of time to do a lot of other things. I don't really like sports; I'm not good at playing them and I'm not really interested in them, except with my sons in a live setting at a baseball or football game.

So, I spend a lot of time reading our magazines; there are all sorts of interesting and thoughtful analyses of trends across the world. I do very much believe in interdisciplinary thinking, that the answers to some business problems are found by looking at other industries, not just our own. So, I like to consume as much as I can.

Again, I also get more than a handful of emails at all hours of the day and so I'm communicating all through the day and evening. It's a weird statement to make, but part of my

personal career success is that fact that most people watch TV 20 or 30 hours per week. If you only do that two hours per week, you have a lot of time to do a lot of other things, from reading books for enjoyment to playing games and just everything else. That will eliminate me from being head of Hearst Television; I can cross that job off the list. (Laughs) But I have friends who talk about this show or that show and I don't know what they're talking about. It's just one of those things. My wife and kids will watch every Housewives show, you name it, but it's something that never really attracted me.

**Samir Husni: And what's the next big surprise we're going to hear from Hearst Magazines come October 2017, since October seems to be the launch date for new magazines?**

David Carey: I think that we're at it every day. We run in spurts as I mentioned to you. We have big initiatives and they all come in kind of when they're ready. But our teams are thinking about how to advance and evolve other businesses every day. I don't know if we have any significant step-function changes in what we do, but I think that being open to everything is how we spend our time.

**Samir Husni: Thank you.**