

Mr. Magazine™ Selects 'InStyle' – The Hottest Magazine Launch Of The Past 30 Years

You can't have the [30 Hottest Magazine Launches of the Past 30 Years](#) without calling out the current Hottest Publisher, Editor and Designer(s) who have put their respective magazine(s) through its paces to land it in this most elite of groups. Announcements of the winners were made at the min 30 Event on April 14 at the Grand Hyatt in New York.

On any given day, [Mr. Magazine™](#) can be seen flipping through individual copies of new magazine launches, but I can also be found thumbing happily among those legacy brands that have led the way for all those new titles that have followed, such as in the case of the 30 Hottest Launches of the Past 30 Years.

And in doing so, I have observed the trails that have been blazed in both the editorial and designer forests, and with the advertising revenue streams that run perpendicular to those creative trails, only to connect somewhere a little farther down the path to become the communal force of nature that they are when joined.

The result was the Hottest Publisher, Editor, and Designer of the past 30 years. After all, you can't have hot magazines without equally smoking people. So, as difficult as it was to choose among the stellar talent out there, I somehow managed to do it, and during the same epiphany came up with five questions to ask each of them.

Without further ado, we begin with our **Hottest Publisher of the Last 30 Years:**

Hubert Boehle, President, CEO, Bauer Media Group USA, LLC.



Samir Husni: What do you think has been the biggest challenge in your career and how did you overcome that challenge?

Hubert Boehle: I faced the biggest challenge of my career right after I joined Bauer Media in the U.S. in 1989. The company had just launched First for Women and even though we spent millions on TV ads the magazine just didn't hit its target numbers. The problem was that we had badly underestimated the readers' attachment to the Seven Sisters. The launch plan was to offer a magazine similar in content but younger than the established magazines, but – contrary to our experience in Europe – focus group attendants kept telling us: "I trust this old brand; my mother used to read it and so will I." My boss at the time, Konnie Wiederholz, charged me with getting the magazine to profitability. I wanted that challenge, but at the same time I was scared to death because I was inexperienced and had almost no familiarity with the American marketplace. As you know, First is still around and has been a healthy magazine for close to 30 years, so obviously it all worked out. Our first goal was to stem the losses. We used all the tricks you learn in Publishing 101: cutting costs, firing up the ad sales team, raising the cover price, changing frequency, fine-tuning the editorial product. I took some of these actions with bated breath. Not all of them worked, but all in all the changes were successful, and I

felt like an Olympic finalist when we finally crossed the break-even point.

Samir Husni: What has been the most pleasant moment in your career so far?

Hubert Boehle: Probably that too happened during the relaunch of First for Women, and it taught me the power of reader-focused editorial. In its initial years, First suffered from terrible price elasticity. We raised the cover price twice, from \$1.00 to \$1.25 and from \$1.25 to \$1.50. Both increases were a waste of time, because we lost so much circulation that the net effect was close to zero. So the market was sending us a clear message: your original launch idea – an eighth sister for younger readers – stinks!

The decisive turnaround happened when we noticed that the magazine sold better with topics that addressed the reader not in her roles as mother, cook and housewife, but as a young woman with personal needs and interests. We did well when we covered topics like hairstyles and diets on the cover and we lost to the competition when we offered Seven Sisters staples like household tips, recipes and crafts.

So we finally changed the editorial positioning of the magazine to what we still use as our tagline: We put you first! Looking at women's magazines today, it's hard to believe that would make such a big difference, but back then, the focus on fashion, beauty, health, nutrition and diet was a real USP. After this repositioning, we went through with a hefty price increase, from \$1.50 to \$1.99 and this time we didn't lose a single copy in sales.

Samir Husni: Looking at the industry as a whole, do you think we are better off today than the "good ol' days?"

Hubert Boehle: This would be the moment for me to say, "There's never been a better time for quality journalism," but, let's face it, the "good ol' days" weren't just good,

they were mind-blowing. Magazine publishing was like a license to print money and you had to spend a lot of time golfing not to achieve double-digit margins.

From that perspective, it's difficult to be nostalgia-proof. Revenues and margins are under pressure and nobody expects that magazine publishing as an industry can return to the old way of doing business. For the last few years, every publishing house has had to adapt to this new reality of shrinking returns, and we will need to keep on finding new ways of managing our business and, most of all, new business. I wish I knew what exactly that new business will be; my guess is there will not be one solution that will fit all, and instead, a number of different paths depending on each publisher's particular know-how.

Samir Husni: From a publisher's point of view how do you view the future or the "publishing" profession?

Hubert Boehle: There's no doubt that we will go through a period of intense changes. My hope is that the change will be a transformation, rather than a disruption, of the current situation. I hope we publishers will be able to use the capital, the talent and the know-how we have gathered to, on the one hand, keep our magazines attractive enough so they continue to find readers, and, on the other hand, to successfully invest in new activities. Platform agnostic is the sexy new phrase, and I am more optimistic than I was a few years ago that we will be successful in developing significant new revenue streams.

Samir Husni: What is your reaction to being named the hottest publisher of the past 30 years?

Hubert Boehle: Samir, we were fortunate enough to win your "Launch of the Year" award a few times and I always felt honored because you choose your top launch based on how you gauge a new title's appeal to the reader, and you've never

been afraid of going against the grain; for example, your vote for Simple Grace this year. And the same can be said for In Touch in 2002 because the title was nothing but a little rebel at the time. So to receive this award – not to mention the million-dollar prize that comes with it – is a special moment in my professional life.



**Hottest Editor of the Past 30 Years:
Ellen Levine, Editorial Director, Hearst
Magazines**

Samir Husni: What do you think has been the biggest challenge in your career and how did you overcome that challenge?

Ellen Levine: I actually love challenges – I find them engaging. Starting new magazines is a creative opportunity that some might see as a challenge, because you need to find true uniqueness and originality, but ultimately it is really a wonderful way to put creativity to work, and I love it.

Samir Husni: What has been the most pleasant moment in your career so far?

Ellen Levine: There have been so many, but one that stands out is launching Food Network Magazine, which we did in the depths of a recession. In fact, the first issue's on-sale date was the day the market tanked. We didn't know what would happen, and when the results started coming in, we could see that it was an immediate, huge hit. People really embraced it, it was just what they needed at that moment, which is always what you

are trying to achieve.

Another very pleasant moment was when we learned that the first issue of O, The Oprah Magazine had sold out in a little over week and we went back to press to print thousands of additional copies – proof that women truly value Oprah's advice and wisdom. In both cases, I felt like we had tapped into something special with our content that really resonated with consumers.

Samir Husni: Looking at the industry as a whole, do you think we are better off today than the “good ol’ days?”

Ellen Levine: To me, every yesterday is a good ol’ day, but tomorrow is the future.

Samir Husni: From an editor's point of view how do you view the future or the “editing” profession?

Ellen Levine: There's more creativity, more room for experimentation than ever before. The original definition of editing was putting pencil to paper, and we all continue to do that too – editing is and will always be essential in the media business.

Samir Husni: What is your reaction to being named the hottest editor of the past 30 years?

Ellen Levine: It is a huge honor, and in so many ways I have Hearst to thank for it. Our leadership, the editors and publishers that I work with every day – we're like a family. There's no other place where I could stretch myself creatively and see things come to fruition the way I have at Hearst, from launching new brands to reshaping and evolving existing ones.

The Hottest Designer(s) of the Past 30 Years:

Robert Priest and Grace Lee of Priest + Grace Design Firm



Samir Husni: What do you think has been the biggest challenge in your career and how did you overcome that challenge?

Priest + Grace: Remaining relevant as a person and as a designer. Being somebody who constantly believes in reinvention and looking forward.

Samir Husni: What has been the most pleasant moment in your career so far?

Priest + Grace: There have been several things really. Moving to New York, from London via Toronto is certainly one. Teaming up with Grace Lee and the effect our collaboration has had on my creatively has been a revelation to me.

Samir Husni: Looking at the industry as a whole, do you think we are better off today than the “good ol’ days?”

Yes! But of course there are many definite challenges right now. I feel everyone is looking for a new way of communicating, and the jury is out as to which path to follow.

Samir Husni: From a designer’s point of view how do you view the future or the “design” profession?

Priest + Grace: It’s about taste and value to me. If you have good taste and can be flexible there’s a place for you in the future of design. If you have great taste, you’re articulate and you don’t compromise, you are the future of the design.

Samir Husni: What is your reaction to being named the hottest

designer of the past 30 years?

Priest + Grace: Incredible!

The Hottest Magazine Launch Of The Past 30 Years: In Style



In 1974 when Time Inc. launched People magazine, many people said that Henry Luce was probably turning over in his grave at how an institution like Time Inc., with titles such as TIME, Fortune and LIFE, were marching through the celebrity neighborhoods with a magazine called People.

However, little did they know that People would change the course of the history of magazines when it came to celebrities and human interest, and needless to say, People also became a major cornerstone in the world of magazine business.

Move forward to 1994; literally ripping a page from the success of People, Time Inc. launched a brand-new baby, born from the womb of the master mother: a baby they named InStyle. The same remarks were made about the infant as there had been about its famous mom two decades before. 'Why would a company that deals with news and weeklies go into the fashion market? Why would they publish a women's magazine that was heavily focused on style and beauty?' The same doubts, with basically

the same naysayers as there had been with People, spouting the same disparagements.

When People was launched there was very little competition in its category, but when InStyle hit newsstands, the fashion field was robust and ripe with some heavy-hitters such as Vogue, Harper's Bazaar and Elle. InStyle had to swallow its nervousness and compete with three giants.

But not only did the magazine compete; it carved a niche for itself and did something the others didn't do, it humanized celebrities. Suddenly people were seeing celebrities in a more personal and relaxed environment, proving that the magazine had a different access to their favorite stars than the others did, making InStyle unique.

The magazine made celebrities, style and fashion accessible to the masses without degrading the subjects they were covering and humanized the personality behind the famous name.

And of course, InStyle is not just limited to the United States. Currently the magazine is being distributed as international editions in 17 other countries including: Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, Brazil, Greece, South Korea, Spain, Russia, Turkey and South America. Its digital footprint is strong as well, with a website and app that keeps the brand in your face, right where it should be.

InStyle fits the criterion excellently that was required and needed to wear the title: The Hottest Launch of the Past 30 Years.

[Click here](#) for the Hottest 30 Magazine Launches of the Past 30 Years