



ESPN Taps Ad Agency Droga5 For More Diverse Brand Campaign

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ESPN plans to target a wider audience through a multi-platform approach, and has tapped creative agency Droga5 to lead a new campaign for its overall brand and "SportsCenter."

"As sports has evolved, we have an opportunity now to speak to a wider audience than just necessarily men," Ed Erhardt, president of global sales and marketing at ESPN, told The Wall Street Journal. "Today's sports fan is more diverse, clearly more female [and] more interested in a wide variety of sports."

The media company is also taking a broad look at sports-from esports, to cycling to baseball-and will use online platforms-like its own streaming service slated for early next year-to expand its viewership.

"Technology has clearly allowed sports fans, through social and a wide variety of other means, to consume and find sports information in many places and in many ways," Erhardt said to WSJ. "We're tuning into that different audience with the work we do."

ESPN chose Droga5 to lead the new campaign after Wieden + Kelly, which developed "This Is SportCenter," ended its 25-year relationship in January and

signed on with Fox Sports.

"We were struck by Droga5's keen understanding of the ESPN brand as well as their strategic thinking and long-term vision," Erhardt said in a statement. "We look forward to working with them to connect with our fans in new ways."

"As sports fans and storytellers, we couldn't be more thrilled to work with [ESPN] to help charter their next iconic chapter," added agency founder and chairman David Droga.

Droga5's past clients include Under Armour, Chase, MailChimp and Pizza Hut, along with newcomers Tencent, Ancestry.com, Dos Equis.

The rebrand comes amid ESPN's struggles as television viewing habits shift from linear to digital.

The mostly Disney-owned company has lost more than 10 million subscribers in recent years as the costs of sports rights have only increased.

According to the New York Times, ESPN has commitments such as the following: a 10-year, \$15.2 billion deal with the NFL; a nine-year \$12 billion deal with the NBA; and a \$7.3 billion deal for the college football playoffs, as well as other sports-rights deals on the books.

ESPN spent approximately \$26.3 million on measured media campaigns in 2016, and just under \$9 million during the first half of 2017, Adweek reports.

Yet ESPN has lost 2.8 million subscribers, not including streaming services, since August 2016, according to Nielsen estimates, WSJ reports. And in April, ESPN laid off about 100 employees, mostly on-air talent, in an effort to refocus its content strategy.

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ESPN says it still has 87.2 million subscribers, including streamers, as it shifts to more digital programming and casts a wider net aimed to capture diverse and distracted sports fans.

"I'm trying to more our overall language from channel and network, to platform," Erhardt said.

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