



PUBLISHER'S Profile

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John Hare

President
ABC Radio Division



Directly out of college, John Hare joined ABC Radio as a salesperson at its Houston radio station. Thirty-three years later, having moved up through the ranks, he is now the President of the ABC Radio division, a post he has held since 1999. He oversees the 65 owned-and-operated ABC radio stations, as well as ABC Radio Networks, home to such important personalities as Paul Harvey, Bob Kingsley and Tom Joyner.

Getting into the business: "When I was in college at a small school in northern Michigan, I had a brother-in-law who sold television time for the ABC O&O station in Detroit, WXYZ-TV. Getting out of school, I had a degree in marketing, and I wanted to get into television. Back then you got into radio for a year or two to learn the ropes, and then you made the jump to television. I got into radio and just never made the leap. There were a couple of opportunities that came up, but, for whatever reason, I decided to stay in radio."

On spending his entire career with the same company: "It's been 33 years. I started with ABC down in Houston, at KXYZ when they bought it. That was in '69. Cap Cities bought ABC in '86, then Disney bought Cap Cities in '96. I am a dinosaur. You don't find guys like me around anymore."

On his success: "I got some great counsel when I was younger, in terms of how you manage your business. Every company has to have good people. Presuming that I was good at what I did, there was no reason why that shouldn't sustain itself. If you look at the transition of Cap Cities and ABC, you couldn't have two senior managers, but you had to have good people running the stations."

"When Disney bought CapCities, they kept the management team in place. If you're running a station, and you've got a good team and good ratings and revenue and you're driving good operating income, why would anyone want to make a change, unless you had some chemistry issues, which I never did? That was part of it. I'm sure luck also came into play, and people in positions of power must have liked me."

The culture of ABC: "One of my strengths is that I've been able to recruit and develop good people and let them do their jobs. In the culture we have — this is probably corny — the critical issue, in terms of driving our business, is trust. If you can't trust who you're working with or they can't trust you, you can't accomplish the goals you put in place. Trust is the glue that keeps things moving together. There's very little that we can't talk about or discuss; there's very little that we need to keep secret from anybody. That builds a sense of trust, and then you have common goals and issues."

"That's the culture I've been able to create here, whether as a sales manager bringing in a good sales team or as a general manager bringing in good department heads — or even at the level I'm at now, where I have four to six key people who report to me who have bought in to my style of management. They take it, and it permeates throughout the organization — at least, I hope it does."

Disney's view of radio: "Michael Eisner said in a few meetings that, if he could get the right price for the radio division, he'd entertain the idea of selling it. He did not necessarily feel it was integral to the company. The company emanates from Disneyland, Disney World, consumer products and the film and theater division. When it bought ABC, the big play was the TV network, ESPN and the O&O TV stations. When it bought us in 1996, we also had a publishing division, which it disposed of. It kept radio, and radio was on a good roll. Disney's had some performance problems; we're carrying a lot of debt right now. If the company could generate \$4 billion to \$5 billion in a sale of this asset to reduce debt, it

has to entertain that idea.

"That being said, I don't feel the company will necessarily sell radio. We provide a lot of income to the company. There are issues in terms of how we can maximize our performance and other things we can do from a synergy standpoint that can benefit some of the other divisions, and the company's really starting to take that into consideration. When the comments came out that it might consider selling radio, there's no way that wasn't going to have some impact. But it's not one of those things, from my perspective or from what my key people are telling me, that is permeating the division and taking away from our focus on driving our business."

Balancing the needs of the network and the local stations: "We're doing a good job of having our networks and stations work a lot closer together. Take Sean Hannity. He was on WABC/New York. Mitch Dolan and Traug Keller put together a plan. We rolled out Hannity, and he's been the hottest thing in syndicated radio. There's a perfect example of how stations and the network are working closer together. The stations are benefiting from an audience standpoint and getting some revenue, and the network is driving a significant amount of revenue."

"There's always been a little bit of a rivalry, but we've pulled together. We say, 'How can the network benefit from what the stations are providing, and how can the stations benefit from what the network is providing?' We've bridged the gap, and there's a tremendous amount of communication. There's very little that goes on at the network that the stations aren't aware of, and the reciprocal is also true."

Biggest challenge: "Finding good people. If you have good people who are smart and who work hard, they're eventually going to find the solutions to the problems. That's a core issue I have. Second, we're going through some technological revolutions, in terms of where DARS is, where the Internet is fitting in, how IBOC will enhance us, and the impact of MP3s and people recording their own CDs. We've got to be smart and be aware of what's going on. Radio's been through it before. When TV came in, radio was dead. When FM came in, AM was dead. Now we've got these new services coming. What impact will they have on radio? We've been resilient, and we'll continue to be resilient."

"We also need to look into how we can continue to sustain revenues to grow our business bigger than the 8 cents on the dollar we get now. With consolidation, we should be able to get a larger piece of the advertising pie. I'm not sure the impact of consolidation is over. People are starting to get their arms around how they want to operate. The question is whether consolidation has matured to a point where that will be the case, or will there be issues down the road that we haven't thought about that could impact our business?"

State of the industry: "It's in good shape. We have a tremendous future, even with the technologies coming out that will be additional competitors. Radio is a core part of people's lives; that's not going to change. The one thing I do think about is whether consolidation has become a focus, from a financial standpoint. Because of the financial pressures being put on operators and the type of content we're providing, I wonder whether we're running too many commercials. That can have a little bit of an effect on the ultimate consumer. We've got to make sure we're smart. It's still a ratings-driven game. We need to protect our product, promote our product and deliver a good product to the listener. We're losing young listeners, and that's a problem."

On attracting younger listeners with Radio Disney: "It's been a difficult business for us to get up and running, but we've been in it for close to five years now. We've evolved and become smarter about what we're doing. It has tremendous growth opportunities. I'm very pleased with what we've done. It's interesting to see the evolution of these kids and how we're trying to evolve the product — not necessarily to get older, but to get not only the 5- to 7-year-olds, but also the tweens. I can't think of anybody who's been more innovative at trying to create product both locally and on the network."

Something about his company that might surprise our readers: "Disney really likes radio. Even with all that's been said about selling the division, the company is a fan of what we provide. It sounds like I'm talking out of both sides of my mouth, but I know they appreciate the job we do."

Most influential individual: "One was Marty Greenberg. He brought me into the business. He developed my attitude not only in terms of business, but also in terms of the way I want to live my life. The guy who took it to the next step and made me — I hope — an effective manager is Nick Trigoni, who ran Cox Broadcasting for years and just retired about a year ago. He was a sensational one-minute manager. I learned so much about dealing with people and looking at problems from him. Another guy I worked for in Washington, DC, when I was a GSM, was Ernie Fears. He was a genuine human being and a delightful person to be around, and he wrote the book on the way you should treat people."

Career highlight: "The thing I've been most pleased about over my career has been my ability to bring together a team of people who work well together and develop them into effective managers who hit the goals that we set. Whether it was as a sales manager or general manager or group president or what I'm doing now, I'm most proud of being able to build a team that believes in what it's doing."

Career disappointment: "None, really. If I had it to do over again, would I have

investigated getting into station ownership years ago? I don't know. It's probably something I should have done. It's a bit of a disappointment that I didn't take a shot at it."

Favorite radio format: "I'm a News/Talk fan right now."

Favorite television show: "The Sopranos and NYPD Blue."

Favorite song: "'If You're Gone' by Matchbox Twenty."

Favorite book: "Shogun by James Clavell."

Favorite movie: "Braveheart."

Favorite restaurant: "One is the Palm. The other is Three Chimneys on the Isle of Skye in Scotland."

Beverage of choice: "Water."

Hobbies: "I play a little golf, and I've recently gotten into photography with my digital camera. I'm still a neophyte, but it's something I'm playing with."

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Advice for broadcasters: "We need to be passionate about what we do, in terms of driving our products and our love of radio. One thing none of us does a very good job of is developing our people — bringing them in and training them properly. I don't care if it's talent, promotion, sales or management, we are very lean in that area. As our business continues to mature, that's an area we've got to get smarter about."

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