



Scripps Networks names Prez for Travel Channel

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Scripps Networks announced that National Geographic Channel veteran Laureen Ong was named president of the Travel Channel, according to the [company](#).

Ong joins Knoxville, Tenn.-based Scripps Networks after serving as chief operating officer of Hong Kong-based Star Group Limited for the past three years. She said in a statement that Travel Channel is poised for growth.

Scripps Networks simultaneously appointed Jonathan Sichel to the role of general manager of Travel Channel. He formerly held the title of senior VP of commercial affairs and operations at the Travel Channel, and had served as interim GM since it was acquired by Scripps (DailyVista [article](#).)

Sichel will work closely with Ong as they focus on building the brand, developing additional programming and talent to increase ratings and creating new business opportunities for Travel Channel.

Travel Channel was founded in 1987 and reaches about 95 million U.S. households. In addition to its television operations, the network provides content for online, mobile and social media applications.

Scripps Networks Interactive is a leading developer of lifestyle-oriented content for television and online. Its portfolio includes cable networks HGTV, Food Network, DIY Network, Fine Living Network and Great American Country. Its Web properties include BizRate and Shopzilla.

[Scripps Networks'](#) SVP of Corporate Communications Cindy McConkey spoke further with DailyVista about Ong and Sichel's new roles at [Travel Channel](#).

"Right now, Laureen's role is to guide and direct the network and the Travel Channel business," she said. "As far as delineating those specific roles – what she does versus the general manager – they'll be working that out in the next couple of weeks."

Ong will ultimately be responsible for the business, McConkey said. Her immediate priorities will be to grow Travel Channel's audience, which has had great momentum and a great deal of growth since its inception.

"Her role is to build on that momentum and within a couple of years, put them on the same level with HGTV and the Food Network," our source said. "In terms of the brand, I think their brand is very well established; they're really looking to grow the audience and keep up the ratings."

Additionally, Ong will look at other ways to grow the business, similar to what Food Network and HGTV has been able to do with their brand extension. McConkey had previously discussed these types of efforts with DailyVista, explaining that a vast majority of Scripps' entities have built online social media community platforms to further engage viewers.

“(Travel Channel) just recently successfully leveraged local radio with the launch of the new show ‘Food Wars,’ which pits two local eateries against each other but it engages the local community in that – in the branding and in the actual competition – so it creates a lot of attention in that situation,” she said. “It was a very strategic move to leverage local radio.”

This is a great strategy for this particular show, but McConkey said that in the future, viewers may see Travel Channel developing even more smart marketing and advertising strategies that are customized for specific programming or specific opportunities.

“An important point that’s not to be missed here is the significance of Scripps’ ad sales team, which has taken the responsibility of the ad sales function,” she said. “And as far as partnerships with our clients for marketing and product integration are concerned, we’re now out at the forefront with Travel Channel in our portfolio for the first time ever.”

McConkey clarified that in the past, Travel Channel didn’t have its own entity, and prior to its sale by Discovery Channel, it never had a dedicated team that was focused on creating and garnering attention for the channel’s program content.

“It’s going to get from Scripps moving forward – we’re already creating some smart marketing tools for our clients for Travel Channel,” she said. “A quick example is the Travel Diary, where we take what the network does well, which is story-telling around the topic of travel, and we tie it in with a product that fits the story. It’s usually a converged approach, where it’s done on-air and online.”

While most networks – and most companies in general – are leveraging an integrated approach to marketing these days, Scripps Networks has a proven track record, and has excelled incredibly well with extremely affective integration techniques.

“Scripps is more thoughtful in the media environment, and as a result, advertisers are interested in it,” McConkey said. “They’re looking for ways to make their product stand out in the noise and the clutter of the media environment – so when talking about Travel Channel, it’s a combination of Lauren coming on board, along with having a dedicated ad sales team.”