



GET TO KNOW JOHN ROSSITER

Title: EVP: Distribution and Networks

Company: Sony Pictures Entertainment, Latin America

John Rossiter is Sony Pictures Entertainment's (SPE) EVP of Distribution, Networks, and Production for Latin America. He assumed this role in January 2021 and oversees all lines of business for TV distribution, production, media networks, and home entertainment for SPE across Latin America. Rossiter, who is currently based in Miami, first joined Sony Pictures in 2000 as a director of business development

and finance. He began his broadcast career as a senior financial analyst at Walt Disney Television International. From 2018 to 2021, Rossiter served as EVP, Distribution, and Networks for Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East & Africa for Sony Pictures Television (SPT). In this role, which was based in London, he was responsible for television and home entertainment businesses and managing SPT-owned networks in the region. Before this, Rossiter was based in Budapest for seven years as SVP and Managing Director of Networks, overseeing six brands with 26 distinct channel feeds across 13 Central European countries. In this capacity, he launched the dedicated SVOD service AXN Now as well as AXN Spin; led the acquisition of Viasat channels, which significantly grew Sony Pictures' portfolio in Hungary; established in-house distribution sales and marketing in four countries; and built a stand-alone ad sales team. During his tenure at HBO from 2004 to 2011, Rossiter made significant contributions as the SVP of Sales, Operations and Business Development. He was responsible for expanding HBO into five additional countries and launching the Cinemax and HBO Go business lines, which led to remarkable double-digit revenue growth.

HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE THE STATE OF GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT MARKETS AND DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS TODAY?

I always start talks saying that the global entertainment industry is in constant flux, driven by technological advancements, changing consumer behaviors, and an increasingly interconnected world. I always break down the prevailing trends and their impact on the business today:

Digital Dominance: Streaming Services: The rise of streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+, and regional players like MNET and Vix in Latin America, have revolutionized content consumption. These platforms offer vast libraries of on-demand content catering to diverse tastes and preferences. The digital players like Netflix, Facebook, Google and Amazon represent 85% of the media landscape by market value. The Hollywood majors, of which Sony is one, have become much smaller in terms of relative market capitalization.

Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) Models: Media companies are increasingly adopting DTC models, bypassing traditional distribution channels, going over the top (OTT) and bypassing the middleman. This allows them to build direct consumer relationships, gather valuable data, and offer personalized experiences. It is the data gathering part that is particularly important, as it gives so much insight into the mind of the consumer.

IN WHAT WAY IS TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMING THE PRODUCTION, REPURPOSING, DELIVERY, CONSUMPTION AND SHARING OF CONTENT GLOBALLY?

AI and machine learning are transforming content creation, recommendation algorithms, and marketing strategies:

AI and Data Analytics: As I said earlier, data is key for the "Data" analytics perspective as they help us understand audience preferences and optimize content delivery. Make no mistake, there is no substitute for taste, and gut instinct, but the data can help with decision making – not totally replace it.



Market Fragmentation and Consolidation: The proliferation of streaming services has led to market fragmentation with consumers subscribing to multiple platforms to access a wide range of content. This is causing churn while also leading to consolidation.

Changing Revenue Models: Subscription revenue models dominate the market, offering ad-free experiences for a monthly fee. However, the saturation of subscription services is prompting the exploration of hybrid models.

Ad-Supported Models: Ad-supported streaming services (AVOD) are gaining traction. They provide free access to content in exchange for advertising and cater to price-sensitive consumers.

HOW IS THIS BENEFITING MULTICULTURAL CONTENT CONSUMERS AND DIVERSIFYING SOURCES AND SECTORS OF REVENUE?

There is a growing appetite for diverse and localized content:

Content Localization: Audiences are no longer limited to their domestic productions but embrace international content, leading to the global success of series like *'Money Heist'* and *'Squid Game'*. A few years back, selling programming that needed subtitles to be understood was very difficult.

Local Productions: To cater to specific markets, major streaming platforms invest in local content production. For example, Netflix produces *'Sacred Games'* for the Indian market and *'Dark'* for the German market, ensuring cultural relevance and resonance with regional audiences. Our business in Latin America depends heavily on the content that we produce for local markets as it builds relevance.

Emerging Markets: Regions like Asia, Africa, and Latin America are experiencing rapid growth in digital media consumption. Investments in infrastructure and increasing internet penetration are driving this trend. There are many examples of new technology platforms creating opportunities not available to many developed countries.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES TO OPERATING AND GROWING BUSINESSES IN THE EMERGING MARKETS WHERE YOU HAVE WORKED?

There are challenges of course that I will detail below, but I stress that these challenges make for opportunities in the market:

Regulatory Compliance: Navigating different regulatory environments can be complex. Each country has its own set of rules regarding media ownership, content distribution, and advertising standards. I have seen advertising laws change in every market that I have worked in.

Economic Instability and Currency Fluctuations: Emerging markets often experience volatile currency exchange rates, affecting profitability and financial planning. High inflation rates can erode purchasing power and affect consumer spending on media and entertainment. Argentina has had 100% annual year inflation has made for a very challenging environment.

Infrastructure Challenges Technology and Connectivity: In many emerging markets, there can be significant disparities in internet infrastructure, affecting the delivery and quality of digital content. This is also an opportunity in new markets, as the mobile phone is a much more important gateway to the customer than in North America or Western Europe.

Diverse Consumer Preferences: Consumer preferences can vary widely across different regions within a country, requiring tailored content strategies. When we operated our business in Eastern Europe, we had 15 countries with completely different languages and regulatory conditions. In Latin America, the fact that 300 million people spoke the same language allowed us to build a business of scale.



Competition from Local Players: Local media companies often have a strong foothold and a better understanding of the market. Often the major local players, and I cannot name names here, help write the legislation that makes it harder for foreign players to operate effectively.

Political and Social Unrest: Political instability and social unrest can disrupt business operations and affect consumer confidence.

Talent Acquisition and Retention: Finding and retaining qualified professionals can be challenging in emerging markets.

Cultural Sensitivity: Understanding and respecting cultural nuances is crucial for success in diverse markets.

Intellectual Property and Piracy: Intellectual property protection can be weak in some emerging markets, leading to high rates of content piracy.

WHAT FORMATIVE LIFE STAGE EXPERIENCES HAVE MOST PREPARED YOU FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP ROLE TODAY?

To start with, my upbringing in multicultural environments, where I was immersed in various cultures and languages, has deeply instilled in me a profound respect for the understanding of different viewpoints. This early exposure has proven invaluable in my leadership roles, particularly when leading teams across the diverse regions of Central Europe and Latin America. After you work with many different nationalities you learn to distinguish between cultural differences and the solid values you can identify in people. Learn a little bit of the native language of the people you work with. My education, particularly with regards to my BCom at Rhodes University and later media studies at universities, has been foundational. I started at the bottom in entry-level positions within the media industry and was fortunate enough to take part in media training programs at Disney. These allowed me to understand the intricacies of the business from the ground up. However, I think mentorship was the single largest factor: Throughout my career, I have been fortunate to have mentors who provided guidance, support, and valuable insights. You learn the most through mentorship which provides you with perspective as you learn. Thank You Darren Childs, Linda Jensen and Mike Wald.

Moving between Africa, Europe and Latin America required me to adapt quickly to new markets, business practices, and cultural nuances. This experience enhanced my flexibility, problem-solving skills, and ability to lead change in dynamic environments. Taking on leadership roles early in my career and experiencing successes and failures were crucial learning experiences. Failures, in particular, were not setbacks - they taught me resilience, the importance of innovation, and the need to evolve and adapt my leadership style constantly. Witnessing the rapid evolution of technology in the media industry has taught me the importance of staying ahead of trends and being open to continuous learning. Embracing digital transformation has been essential for maintaining competitiveness and relevance in the industry.

WHERE DO YOU SEE THE GREATEST JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN THE DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS FOR NEW UNIVERSITY GRADUATES?

There are many opportunities in the industry and in many different disciplines, such as:

Content Creation and Production: Writers, directors, and producers who can create compelling stories and content for various platforms, including streaming services, web series, and social media.

Video Production and Editing: Skilled professionals in video production, editing, and post-production are in high demand to produce polished and engaging content.

Animation and Visual Effects: Animators and VFX artists who can bring stories to life with cutting-edge technology are crucial, especially for gaming, film, and television.



Digital Marketing and Social Media: Experts in SEO, SEM, content marketing, and data analytics who can drive audience engagement and growth for digital content.

Social Media Managers: Professionals who can create and manage engaging content across social media platforms, understanding trends and audience preferences.

Technology and Development: Developers specializing in creating apps, websites, and platforms for streaming, gaming, and other digital entertainment services.

Game Development: Game designers, developers, and testers who can create immersive gaming experiences across various platforms.

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning: Specialists who can develop algorithms for content recommendation systems, personalization, and enhanced user experiences.

Data Analytics: Professionals who can interpret and analyze data to drive decision-making in content creation, marketing, and user engagement strategies.

User Experience (UX) Designers: Designers who can create intuitive and engaging user interfaces for digital platforms and applications.

User Research Analysts: Researchers who study user behavior and preferences to optimize content and platform design.

Business Development Strategists: Analysts who can assess market trends, competitive landscapes, and business performance to inform strategic decisions.

Sales and Partnership Managers: Professionals who can build and manage relationships with advertisers, distributors, and other partners.

Content Acquisition and Licensing: Specialists who negotiate and manage the acquisition and licensing of content for various platforms.

Virtual and Augmented Reality - VR/AR Developers: Developers who can create immersive experiences for entertainment, education, and other applications.

3D Modelers and Designers: Professionals who can design and develop 3D models and environments for VR/AR experiences.

Legal Advisors: Lawyers specializing in intellectual property, digital rights, and content distribution to navigate the complex legal landscape of digital entertainment.

Ethics and Compliance Officers: Professionals who ensure that content and business practices adhere to ethical standards and regulations.

Localization Specialists: Professionals who adapt content for different languages and cultural contexts to appeal to global audiences.

Market Expansion Strategists: Experts who plan and execute strategies to enter and grow in new international markets.