

CNN SINKS TO 20 YEAR LOW AS CEO MULLS CHANGES



Speaking at a media summit, Turner Broadcasting CEO Phil Kent, expressed concern about the dismal ratings that CNN had generated and confessed that he was "very unhappy." He said that the reason for the poor performance of the channel was "self-inflicted" because, "we haven't put the best shows on the air." He hinted at plans for arresting the decline and said that probably some of the programs need to be replaced. May was the worst month for the network and its viewership dropped to its lowest in two decades. CNN managed an average of just 389,000 primetime viewers from April 30 to May 27. In comparison, MSNBC drew an average of 674,000 total viewers, while Fox News was eons ahead with an average of 1,692,000 total viewers. What must have been rather hard to take for the CNN head, was that CNN fell behind even its tabloidier kid-sister station, Headlines News. Even though Kent was very critical of the programs, he staunchly defended the CNN's primetime lineup, saying that the team had "very high potential." He had comforting words for Anderson Cooper, Erin Burnett and Piers Morgan, whose respective shows did not perform too well last month. Kent said that Morgan was "a tremendous interviewer," but said that Burnett's show "should be doing better," yet upheld her as "a great get" for CNN. Morgan had huge shoes to fill, as he replaced Larry King, however, Kent says, "it seems to be that when he is interviewing people that are in the news in a meaningful way, the show works better than a typical celebrity interview. I don't really know what to make of that yet." CNN is renowned for its breaking news stories and over the years has had its fair share of them. Unfortunately, for them, this year there have been few, unlike last year when there was a glut of news following Tsunamis, earthquakes and reactor meltdowns. "This is not an excuse. It's just a fact," said Kent, saying that these factors contributed to the problem. "The pressure on all of us, on me, on the CNN management from me is to raise the quality and the consistency of the quality," he said. "I am a firm believer that if we raise the quality of these shows and make them a little surprising -- sometimes also it's also a little repetitive throughout the day -- if we raise the quality and we do it with consistency the ratings will be just fine. I can't tell you that we'll beat this one or that one. But they'll be a hell of a lot better than they are right now and we'll be fine." It seems that CNN is in store for a huge shake-up as it figures out how to turn the situation around. Kent hinted at some changes in the works, saying, "we have some other shows that probably need to be replaced." The CEO said he's expecting TNT's ratings to rebound in the second half of the year, as TBS' already have, and that the company will be recording significant increases in carriage fees as its deals with cable operators expire between 2014 and 2016.

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