

Christie tells how Playboy switches with the times

By Susan Thyngerson-Aktry
special writer

Playboy Magazine magnate Hugh Hefner has largely delegated the running of his company, says his daughter Christie Hefner.

"I've internally, senior people's contact with him is virtually nonexistent, and the business side won't only with me," she said.

Management decisions are made in Chicago, says Hefner, 32-year-old president of Playboy Enterprises, who addressed a luncheon meeting of the American Marketing Association and the Adcraft Club of Detroit at the Michigan Inn in Southfield on March 15.

"Over the last four plus years Playboy Magazine has gone through significant changes," Hefner told the crowd of over 150.

Mentioning the change of emphasis from gaming to publication and the sell-off of the Playboy Atlantic City Ca-

sino, she cited significant cuts in administrative expenses, the selling-off of non-income-producing entities, stabilization of the magazine publication and circulation, and the new Playboy Channel television venture.

All of these, she asserts, have contributed to the progress from losses of \$14 million to a current cash supply of \$45 million.

"PLAYBOY has been known more for its size than its steak," Hefner says. "Now for the commercial: Playboy has grown up and so have our readers."

She explained that the mostly 25-35-year-old male readership is "acquisitive and active" and that, to accommodate it, "We try and be a magazine of bold, but not elitist; sophisticated, but not elitist; bold, but classy."

One of the P's in "UPPY" stands for Playboy-reading, she quipped.

A new type of binding for the magazine, with "a kind of elegance about it,"

will appear in October. "September is the last where the centerfold playmate will have a staple in her stomach," remarked Hefner.

She also pointed to the hiring of Dan Jenkins, noted sports author, as indicating the magazine's dedication to quality journalism. "We're well represented in the sports field."

"However, men's interests have changed in the past 15 years," she said that along with features on money, sex and cars Playboy has tried to position itself as the provider of information on fashion, grooming, and relationships.

Like local car companies, Hefner said, "In this decade the emphasis is on achievement, success, performance, and enjoyment."

"We are a magazine dedicated to life, including romance and sex. It's not shocking anymore. We try and say nudity and sex are positive and can be classy."

ON MARKET research, she commented: "The last five years have proven that it (listening to customers) is not easy, but critically important. We are only beginning to be a marketing company."

Speaking of the highly competitive nature of the communications media market, Hefner indicated that with 30 national networks and about 27 million videocassette users, a strong commitment to research has to be a thrust of the '80s.

Playboy's research has revealed three prime areas of concern:

Impulse buying doesn't enter in so much because consumers are committed to getting information and making decisions; male-female role distinctions are not nearly as predictable as they once were; and a high premium is placed on getting the best, indicating consumers believe "I deserve the best."

Hefner says the significance of customer education has had to intensify, highlighting a need for high quality-control standards.

HOWEVER, Hefner also offered a caveat against the "ghettoization" of market research: "Research is everybody's job; it is an ongoing process, not a product, a little bit like planning."

Researching is more important than research. It needs to be directional, not definitive."

In response to a question about Playboy's refusal to print the controversial and now infamous Vanessa Williams nude photos, Hefner said, "I've never regretted that decision, we tried to take the longer view."

Questioned about the profitability of the Playboy Cable television Channel, she said, "We became profitable last year, with 800,000 subscribers," adding they are "shopping for the two-plus million subscriber."

The Playboy Pub is a "new concept" for the company which Hefner said has "great franchising potential" if the prototypes are successful.

Regarding "trouble spots" Hefner said, "We don't have any," but then



Please turn to Page 12 Christie Hefner

Ronna Romney talks in OCC speaker series

The Oakland Community College Winter Speakers Series at their Orchard Ridge Campus will conclude with Ronna Romney at 7 p.m. Thursday.

Romney, who is making her first appearance in this series, will discuss "Commitment: Family, Community and Government" in Room 3-24.

Romney is co-author of "Giving Time a Chance," a book about success in marriage. She is a writer, lecturer,

politician, wife and mother of five children.

She has served in a variety of capacities including Republic National Committee woman and honorary chairwoman of the 1984 Metro Detroit American Cancer Society. She also served as presidential appointee to the National Advisory Board on Adult Education.

For more information, contact Harvey Bronstein at 471-7750.

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