

**Hearst navigates decades of media industry change, adapts to shifting landscape, says former CEO Frank Bennack Jr.**

For nearly 140 years, [Hearst Corporation](#) has navigated dramatic shifts in how Americans consume news and entertainment. Former CEO and current Executive Vice Chairman [Frank Bennack Jr.](#) said the company's longevity stems from its ability to adapt.

"When I became the CEO of Hearst, the thing I thought most important was for us to expand electronically," Bennack said during a press conference on Monday.

At the time, Hearst had spent more than a century focused largely on print publications. As advertising became more competitive and television gained influence, Bennack viewed diversification as essential to the company's future.

That strategy led Hearst into television, cable networks and eventually digital media. Bennack cited the company's partnership with ABC in the early 1980s as a key step in launching cable channels, including Lifetime and Arts & Entertainment (A&E), and later ESPN.

Today, Hearst owns more than 200 magazine titles worldwide, 23 daily newspapers and dozens of weekly publications. But the company has expanded well beyond traditional media. Bennack said about 60% of Hearst's profits now come from business-to-business operations.

The shift comes as [newspapers and magazines continue to face industrywide challenges](#). Local newspapers have closed across the country as readership and advertising revenue have declined.

Despite those pressures, Bennack said Hearst remains committed to local journalism.

"The number of cities with more than one newspaper, you can count on less than one hand," Bennack said. "But it's still a business that we believe is important, and we feel an obligation, along with the fact that it's in our DNA, to serve communities with what we do in newspapers."

That commitment to "cover what needs to be covered" remains visible in Hearst's newspaper portfolio. This year, Hearst-owned newspapers, including the [San Francisco Chronicle](#) and the recently acquired [Dallas Morning News](#), earned Pulitzer Prizes for their reporting.

Bennack acknowledged that not every investment has paid off. Hearst experienced setbacks through unsuccessful magazine launches and losses during the dot-com boom. Still, he said the company has succeeded by remaining open to change.

"We don't see around corners," Bennack said. "But we like to think we can hear around corners."

The next major challenge, he said, is artificial intelligence.

Rather than viewing AI solely as a threat, Bennack said Hearst is taking what he described as both a defensive and offensive approach.

"The only thing I know where defense is adequate is football," Bennack said. "Everything else requires a combination of defense and offense, and we're on the offense with AI."

For Bennack, adapting to change also means maintaining a commitment to the communities Hearst serves.

"You have to care about the community and the world in which you operate," he said.