

Geraldine B. Laybourne
Founder, Chairman & CEO
Oxygen Media, LLC

Geraldine Laybourne founded Oxygen Media and served as its chairman and chief executive officer until she sold it to NBC Universal in 2007. Oxygen was launched in 2000 to fill a void in the television landscape—creating a network targeted to younger women. Oxygen’s founding investors were Oprah Winfrey, Carsey, Werner, Mandabach and Paul Allen. Signature programs like *Who Cares About Girls*, *Mo’Nique’s Fat Chance* and *Campus Ladies* set to debunk myths about women and television and showed women would watch advocacy programming, fat can be beautiful and women are deeply funny. Its signature advocacy event, Mentors Walk (where accomplished women turned out in large numbers to mentor up and coming women), has been adopted by women in 10 countries.

A pioneer in creating innovative and high-quality television programming for children, Laybourne spent 16 years at Nickelodeon, taking over the management of the network in 1984.

Laybourne and her team were responsible for creating and building the Nickelodeon brand and in 1985, for launching Nick at Nite, the successful primetime line-up of retro sitcoms. Under her leadership, Nickelodeon became the top-rated 24-hour cable programming service and won several notable honors, including Emmys®, Peabodys®, CableACE® and Parent’s Choice® awards, among numerous others. Nickelodeon disrupted conventional thinking about kids and showed that they would watch live action as well as animation (*Double Dare* and *You Can’t Do That on TV*), girls could be just as popular on TV as boys (*Clarissa Explains it All* and *The Secret World of Alex Mack*), kids would care about world news if someone made it relevant (*Nick News*), and creator driven animation could be more popular than toy driven animation (*Rugrats*, *Ren and Stimpy*, and *Doug*). Described in 1995 by *The New York Times* as “the executive who put children’s television on the big-time business map,” she expanded the brand by launching and distributing Nickelodeon programming to countries around the world, developing theme park attractions and creating Nickelodeon movie, toy and publishing divisions.

In many ways Nickelodeon changed the way the advertising world spoke to kids. It set a non-condescending style that refrained from telling kids what to think about products and that had to be fun, not say fun.

From 1996-1998, Laybourne was president of Disney/ABC Cable Networks. During this time she was responsible for overseeing cable programming for the Walt Disney Company and its ABC subsidiary. She put in place the team at the Disney Channel that went on to reinvent tween programming. While there, she was also in charge of developing future television programming for cable and other platforms. In addition, Laybourne played a role in the creation and management of ABC’s Saturday morning children’s programming schedule.

Laybourne has been singled out for her many contributions to the industry. She was ranked number one among the 50 most influential women in the entertainment industry by *The Hollywood Reporter* in 1996 and named one of the 25 most influential people in America by *TIME* magazine that same year. Her numerous awards include the Annenberg Public Policy Center’s award for Distinguished Lifetime Contribution to Children and Television, the New York Women in Communications Matrix Award® for Broadcasting, and the Creative Coalition’s Spotlight Award. Her other honors include the Grand Tam Award® from the Cable and Telecommunications Association for Marketing, the Governor’s Award® from the National Academy of Cable Programming, the American Women in Radio and Television Genii Award®, the Women in Cable Award® and the Sara Lee Corporation’s Frontrunner Award®. She also received both the Entrepreneur of the Year Award® from the University of Missouri at Kansas City and the New York Women in Film Muse Award®. In 1995, she was inducted into the Broadcasting & Cable

Hall of Fame and in October of 2004 she was inducted into the Cable Center Hall of Fame. Her highest honor was being invited into the Cable Entrepreneur's Club in 2007.

Laybourne sat on a number of industry boards and advisory committees, including the National Cable Television Association, the National Council for Families and Television, New York Women in Film & Television (advisory board), Cable Positive (honorary chair) and the Council of National Advisors of Springboard Enterprises. In 1997, she was elected to the board of trustees of Vassar College. Laybourne is also a member of the board of directors of Electronic Arts, JCPenney, Insight Communications, Symantec Corporation and Move.com. She advises many women led start-up companies, is a corporate ambassador for Vital Voices and sits on the board of the White House Project.

Laybourne earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History from Vassar College and a Master of Science degree in Elementary Education from the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to her entertainment career, Laybourne was a teacher, conducted research with children and was an early advocate of education through media. A native of Martinsville, N.J., she and her husband Kit, a producer, author and animator, have two children and three grandchildren.