

NEXT

WHO'S NEXT

## Christina Norman

CEO, OWN: THE OPRAH  
WINFREY NETWORK

◆ **Big Idea:**

To create an entire TV network around Oprah Winfrey's call to "live your best life." Christina Norman, 47, is charged with suffusing the new self-help channel with Oprah's essence. "She's the spirit of the network, the muse of the network, but that doesn't mean you're going to see her on 24 hours of every day," Norman says. OWN launches on

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New Year's Day 2011, replacing Discovery Health. The slate includes a Rosie O'Donnell talk show and a Mark Burnett reality contest called *Your OWN Show: Oprah's Search for the Next TV Star*.

**Credentials:** Norman spent 17 years at MTV, eventually becoming president. She reinvented VH1 and MTV, shepherding hits including *Beavis and Butt-Head*, the Video Music Awards, and the *I Love* series.



**Her recharge:** Norman left MTV in 2008, feeling burned out. Oprah and Discovery Communications were courting her at the time, but she decided to stay home for a year. "It's a luxury, God knows, to be able to take some time off,"

Norman says. "I really wanted to know what I wanted to do. What can I get excited about every day? I think there is a different perspective around reinventing yourself for people of my age now than for my parents' generation. It's not about finding one job and staying forever; it's about trying something new at every turn."

**On first meeting Oprah:** Norman was introduced through a friend while vacationing with her family in South Africa in 2006. "There were a thousand things I wanted to ask, but I didn't want to be pushy. I think for a lot of people, you feel like you know her in ways that you really don't."

**First job:** Delivering the *New York Daily News* to two apartment buildings in her Bronx neighborhood, a route handed down from her brother. "It was a great job. Christmas was amazing; you got a bunch of cash tips. And you learned what it was like to be avoided by people who owed you money."

**East Coast or West Coast?** Though OWN and Norman are based in L.A., she is at heart a New York girl. "I definitely love a beach in December, but there is something so frenetic and graceful about New York's jagged skyline. It's more open."

**App love:** "I just got the iPad. Every time there's a new Mac commercial that shows more apps, I'm like, 'Oooh! I've gotta go get those.'" Her most recent purchase was the Star Walk constellation app, which seems to bring the night sky within reach.

**First concert:** Stevie Wonder, with her parents, when she was 8. "At the end, when everyone was putting up the lighters, I had no idea what that was about. I was like, 'Oh, my God, they're trying to make him see!'"



**On her shuffle:** Erykah Badu's *New Amerykah Part Two (Return of the Ankh)*. "Erykah's record is really great. I just love her so much. But I'm also trying to make sure that I discover some new, interesting stuff for me."

**The soundtrack of their lives:** "Glee has had such an influence on the way young people listen to music. My kids know every word to every

Journey song. And now they know 'Don't Rain on My Parade.' When that Madonna episode with the 'Vogue' video came out, I'm flipping out that it's a shot-for-shot re-creation. My daughter's like, 'What are you talking about?' I'm like, 'How have I failed as a parent?'"

**Must-see TV:** "I'm a *Law & Order* addict. I started off being a straight *Law & Order* fan and



my husband began working on *SVU*, which I always thought was too dark, but then I got completely addicted. And then I got sucked into *Criminal Intent*. I've had my time with each of them over the years."

**Must-feel TV:** At a time when cringe-inducing reality TV seems to be ubiquitous, Norman believes there's a real hunger for introspection and truly redemptive stories, which is what she promises for OWN. "It's television: It should be entertaining. It should really suck you in," she says, "but Oprah means everything with intention. It's about telling great stories with the values that Oprah stands for and finding new ways to do that, every hour of every day."

—KATE ROCKWOOD

