

# Dick Block

## *Biography*



The remarkable career of Dick Block spans nearly seven decades, marked by broadcasting innovations, adroit deal making and ultimately as the consummate teacher. Over this course, Dick has been responsible for several noteworthy benchmarks such as the creation of the Travel Channel and the Game Show Network, shepherding the construction of television stations in seven of the top ten U.S. markets, and even the drafting of FCC regulations. Often preferring to work in the background, Dick has comfortably rubbed elbows with some of the most influential names in media. His easy, can-do manner, wry wit and fearless pursuit of opportunity have often served to break down barriers that others are unable to surmount.

Dick grew up in San Francisco and graduated with an AB degree in Sociology from Stanford University, later returning there to do post-graduate work in Economics. During World War II, he served in the U.S. Merchant Marine Cadet Corps in the Pacific War Zone. The Korean War also saw Dick serving as an officer in the U.S. Coast Guard.

Dick's first broadcasting position came in radio at KDFC-FM in San Francisco, where he was Program Director. From there he went on to work in television station operations and marketing at new stations in Stockton, California (KTVU-36 and KOVR-13). Sacramento was his next stop, at NBC affiliate KCRA. Dick later returned to San Francisco, working at KRON (NBC).

Famed industrialist Henry J. Kaiser's Kaiser Broadcasting was Dick's home for 17 years. As Kaiser's Vice President and General Manager, Dick initiated the first evening television newscast at ABC affiliate KHVH AM-TV in Honolulu, Hawaii. The station became ABC's highest rated affiliate with at least three VHF affiliate stations. Later, as Kaiser Broadcasting's CEO Dick conceived and executed an ambitious business plan to construct new television stations in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and San Francisco. The bold plan also included establishing radio stations in the Boston, Cambridge and San Francisco markets.

Television began to explode in the 1950s, with the UHF TV band being established in 1952 by the FCC to accommodate the tremendous demand for station licenses. But most television sets at the time were only able to receive VHF channels (2-13), which presented a huge barrier for UHF license holders (channels 14 and above). As a result, the majority of new UHF channels failed financially. While the All-Channel Receiver Act of 1962 mandated that all new television sets be capable of receiving all UHF as well as VHF channels, it did not ensure that UHF receivers be engineered to the same quality standards as those handling VHF channels. Enter Dick Block who possessed a unique vision and ability to network and skillfully maneuver behind the scenes. In order to address

UHF's severe competitive disadvantage, Dick formed The Council for UHF Broadcasters, a coalition of commercial and public broadcasters. This consortium lobbied Congress as well as worked with the FCC in formulating regulations that mandated technological improvements to all television sets that put UHF and VHF tuners on par with one another technologically. This achievement established true parity for UHF channels, allowing for independent UHF station viability as well as raising the possibility of a fourth network.

While in the planning stages for the expansion of radio and television stations, Kaiser asked Dick to return to Hawaii to manage their 6,000-acre master planned community, Hawaii Kai. The development became the most profitable division of Kaiser Aluminum. During this time Dick formed a partnership with TelePrompTer Corporation to provide one of the nation's first underground cable systems. An innovative feature of the system was premium-TV capability well before the advent of services like HBO and Showtime.

After leaving Kaiser, Dick formed his own consultancy, Block Communications Group, spending the next decade plus working with various media clients. Dick subsequently joined Metromedia as Executive Vice President of its television station group. At Metromedia, Dick negotiated a groundbreaking agreement with Ted Turner's CNN that allowed Metromedia's non-network-affiliated stations in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, Houston and Minneapolis to have regular access to national and international video news coverage. Dick also coordinated the novel simultaneous airing of a three-part Douglas MacArthur documentary on Metromedia stations and Turner's TBS Superstation. Dick departed Metromedia when it was sold to Fox in 1985, returning to private consulting.

Dick has worked with over 100 major media-related clients, providing consultation and project management services. He is currently involved in International television distribution of the world-famous Rose Parade's New Year's Day telecasts. The parade is distributed to approximately 230 countries and territories. Dick has also worked with the American Forces Network in Germany that included reprogramming its television service in Berlin during the Cold War.

Education has always been a passion of Dick's. For 18 years, until 2018, he produced biannual College Career Day events around the country for the National Association of Television Program Executives (NATPE) Educational Foundation. The highly regarded events were produced much like television programs with leading local media experts being interviewed and interacting with students from area universities, colleges and trade schools.

Dick also possesses an impressive teaching background, having been a guest lecturer at universities including Ohio University, University of California-Berkeley, Syracuse, and the University of Texas-

Austin. He has taught courses at Stanford University and UCLA. Since 2006 Dick has been teaching at the School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California. His popular *Managing Television Stations and Internet Media* course is an overview of television broadcasting and new media. He also continues to be involved in ongoing academic projects at Stanford.

An acknowledged expert in the field, Dick has appeared before Congressional committees and is a contributor to *The New York Times Encyclopedia of Television* (Les Brown, Random House). The comprehensive book contains more than 3,000 entries involving every aspect of television, including production, programming, government regulation, ratings, series, specials, actors, directors, writers, producers, and advertising.

Valued for his extensive experience and insight, Dick has served on the boards of several organizations, including the National Association of Broadcasters, the Association of Independent TV Stations, the Television Bureau of Advertising, the Broadcast Education Association, the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, and the Stanford Alumni Association. He is also a member of Stanford Associates, and was a recipient of the Silver and Gold Circle awards of the Northern California Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

Dick resides in Santa Monica, California, and has two children, four grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

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