



Upfronts 2023

The Writer's Strike Overshadows New Content,
Measurement, and Technology

Updated: May 26th 2023

Better decisions, faster.



Content and technology takes center stage

All the shows, buzz and stories

The 2023 Upfront Week was a week marked by the persistent voice of the Writers Guild of America (WGA) and uncertainty over its impact on current and future programming. The presentations heavily focused on showcasing new and ongoing content, with particular emphasis on sports events, ranging from the Super Bowl to the Olympics.

Streaming took center stage as networks highlighted the parity in program availability between linear and streaming platforms.

'Currency' was a frequent subject as the industry strives for a consistent measurement approach, with networks subtly introducing their ecosystem platforms and tech/data cleanroom solutions. Despite the past buzz, discussions surrounding the Metaverse and VR/AR technologies were minimal or absent altogether. For more event information, review our detailed [recap here](#)

Talent was limited this year due to the writer's strike

This year's Upfront presentations were largely devoid of show talent due to the WGA writer's strike. Most events relied on [company executives](#), select hosts, and sports talent to deliver the message.



Like the Newfront presentations, but in greater force, the [WGA](#) was an active force. They made their presence known at many major network events by [disrupting](#) the entrances and exits at many venues.

The Network presentations did acknowledge the writer strike, including Mark Lazarus, who [opened](#) the NBCUniversal Upfront recognized the strike at the onset of the presentation.

Better decisions, faster.

Content rules, regardless of the viewing method

Exciting [new series](#) made waves at the Upfronts! NBCU led the charge with notable changes, including [Linda Yaccarino's](#) departure just days before. [News](#) content received increased focus alongside buzzworthy series like "The Irrational," "Extended Family," and "Found."

Fox also invested much time presenting their Fox Sports division, for which they brought out various sports stars to help [present](#). They also highlighted Tubi, their FAST channel, presenting its extensive library and active user base.

Disney's Upfront emphasized [sports](#) content, covering nearly the first hour of the presentation. But they made sure to introduce a variety of [new series](#), including new Marvel shows and Star Wars. They even teased a new FX series, "Shogun," which stole the show with a live-action stage battle to excite the crowd.



Warner Brothers stated that this year's Upfront was ["not exactly the show we expected to do."](#) The only talent that made a showing via video was the "Inside the NBA" team and CNN's Anderson Cooper and Kaitlin Collins. Later, fundamental late-night show changes and revised graphics were announced to modernize the network during recent [struggling ratings](#). Finally, the rebrand from "HBO Max" to "[Max](#)" was also shared during the event.

The much-anticipated Netflix upfront suddenly went ["fully virtual"](#) a week before the event. The rationale was in relation to the WGA protests and the potential to disrupt the presentation substantially. In the [presentation](#), Netflix announced a range of new and returning series to entice advertisers.

As advertisers grapple with the economy's impact on upfront budgets, the desire to maintain commitments for inclusive DE&I investment remains steady.

Omnicom is ready to support key activations at the Newfronts and Upfronts, leveraging [Optimum Sports](#)' expertise in sports content.



Alternate Currencies Impact Upfront Buying

The 2023 Upfront presentations are witnessing a significant shift in [audience measurement](#) methods, with approximately 29% of Upfront purchases expected to be processed using alternative currencies rather than relying solely on the traditional Nielsen ratings.

Disney made it a point to highlight that they will incorporate [programmatic elements](#) into every Upfront deal. They otherwise kept technical discussions to a minimum, delving into greater detail during a previous [tech and data showcase](#). Meanwhile, Netflix has embraced [Nielsen's Digital Ad Ratings measurement](#), also known as DAR, starting in Q4.



Several companies, such as [Warner Bros. Discovery](#), [NBCUniversal](#), and [Fox](#), have made pre-Upfront announcements regarding their partnerships with measurement firms like Comscore, VideoAmp, and LiveRamp to develop advanced cross-platform audience metrics. Nielsen, which has regained its Media Rating Council accreditation following an [18-month suspension](#), is placing emphasis on its cross-screen measurement solution called [Nielsen ONE](#).

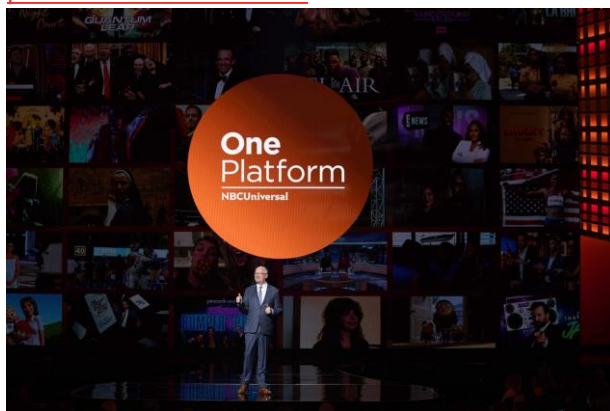
WBD already [announced](#) that they would transact with VideoAmp and Comscore. Other companies are taking a broader and more flexible stance by allowing a range of currencies for transacting.

Clean room solutions were also mentioned, although less frequently, during the Upfront presentations, as it remains an ongoing topic of discussion. Omnicom has been an industry leader in clean-room testing, being the first to test the [NBCUniversal Data Clean Room](#), [VideoAmp Integration](#), and is a member of the [Joint Industry Committee](#). This continues to be a strong focus for the company as we use the technology in more [advanced ways](#).

Enhanced Ad Tools & Opportunities

As the significant shift towards streaming continues, networks are diligently working to enhance their advertising offerings. The 2023 Upfronts highlighted a consistent trend: networks' determination to provide advertisers with better tools to reach audiences, regardless of whether they are watching through streaming, linear, or other platforms.

NBCUniversal is plugged as a leading industry player with One Platform, an advertiser-first ecosystem that reaches 227M U.S. people monthly across all video platforms. It provides multi-currency in-flight linear optimization for TV spots, targeting the precise second with the highest audience concentration. NBC proudly showcases [its platform's extensive reach](#).



Netflix, previously criticized for limited [targeting and measurement](#) options, presented advancements in their advertising offerings during the Upfronts. These advancements included "Sponsorship" opportunities for Upfront advertisers and "Top 10" placements, reaching their subscriber base of [over 5 million in the ad tier](#). As mentioned earlier, their announcement of DAR will provide advertisers with greater insights into these ad-tier viewers.

Additionally, Fox showcased Tubi's AdRise, Televisa Univision emphasized its Hispanic data graph, and Disney discussed its [audience graph](#). WBD's Fusion provided a cross-promotion platform for key initiatives. YouTube maintained its leading position with its integrated Google-based ad platform, effectively reaching vast Gen-Z and millennial audiences.



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