

Paramount Shake-Up: Megan Colligan Out as Marketing and Distribution Chief

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Terry O'Connell
Megan Colligan

Colligan suggests she was effectively terminated because of gender discrimination and bias.

Megan Colligan is stepping down as president of worldwide marketing and distribution at Paramount Pictures, effective immediately, following a dismal run at the box office.

Colligan's attorney says she was pushed out because of gender discrimination, and that she is considering legal action.

Colligan announced her departure to staff Monday morning. Her exit comes as newly installed Paramount chairman-CEO Jim Gianopulos tries to forge a new future for the struggling studio. In September, he replaced motion picture president Marc Evans with Wyck Godfrey.

"She intends to pursue all her remedies," Colligan's attorney Bryan Freedman told *The Hollywood Reporter*. Colligan has sent a letter to parent company Viacom stating that her resignation amounts to "constructive termination" because of gender bias. "I think it is a systemic problem within Paramount," Freedman continued.

While it's true that several other female executives have left Paramount in recent weeks, Gianopulos has also made several hires or promoted women from the inside. Former DreamWorks Animation exec Mireille Soria has been tapped to run animation, while Liz Raposo was promoted to president of production. Other hires include Syrinthia Studer to run acquisitions and Jean Chi to run business affairs.

Gianopulos has not yet announced Colligan's replacement. In a note sent later Monday to studio staff, he apologized for not being able to notify them first.

"We are lucky to have an incredibly experienced and talented team here, all of whom I am confident will be able to step in and market and distribute our movies in a smart, strategic and coordinated manner," Gianopulos said in his note. "With Megan's departure, we will assess the best direction for our marketing and distribution activities in the future."

Colligan, a veteran marketing executive who previously worked at Fox Searchlight and The Weinstein Co., joined Paramount in 2006. She first worked for the studio's now-defunct specialty label, Paramount Vantage, and then moved over to the big studio, where she moved up through the ranks before being tapped as president of worldwide marketing and distribution in 2014 by former chief Brad Grey.

Colligan guided campaigns for the *Mission: Impossible*, *Star Trek* and *Transformers* series, along with event pics like *The Wolf of Wall Street*, while also shepherding numerous awards campaigns, including one last year for *Arrival*.

Paramount is currently enduring tough times at the box office. In September, Darren Aronofsky's *mother!*, starring Jennifer Lawrence, was a major disappointment, followed last week by George Clooney's *Suburbicon*, starring Matt Damon and Julianne Moore. The latter pic has grossed a mere \$5.1 million in its first 10 days in release.

Colligan's exit comes as the studio readies *Daddy's Home 2* for release on Friday, followed by awards hopeful *Downsizing*, directed by Alexander Payne and likewise starring Damon, on Dec. 22. Her departure from the lot means it will be up to her team to manage various releases and awards campaigns, unless Gianopulos is able to fill her position immediately.

Below is the note Colligan sent to her staff:

To my incredible team,

I'm writing to let you know that today I am leaving Paramount. I'm indebted to you for your hard work, inspired talents and true professionalism.

You are a team in every sense of the word. You never give up and never give in, no matter how great the challenge. You are true collaborators who respect one another, but are never afraid to challenge one another.

You will work yourselves tirelessly to get the job done, but will always find a way to make one another laugh.

You made me proud to come to work every single day and I will miss you all very much.

Thank you for everything and I look forward to what's next.

Below is the note Gianopulos later sent to all studio staff:

As you all may have heard by now, Megan Colligan has decided to leave Paramount Pictures, effective immediately. We were hoping to notify all of you before the press wrote any stories, but in this day and age, that often proves impossible. I apologize we could not get to you first.

We are lucky to have an incredibly experienced and talented team here, all of whom I am confident will be able to step in and market and distribute our movies in a smart, strategic, and coordinated manner.

With Megan's departure, we will assess the best direction for our marketing and distribution activities in the future. In the interim, Rebecca Mall, Peter Giannascoli and Kyle Davies will oversee day-to-day domestic marketing and distribution, while Mary Daily and Mark Viane will supervise international activities, all reporting to me.

We are a great company with exceptional people, and I am more bullish than ever about our future together.

Best,

Jim



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