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## New 4A's Boss: Ad Industry Can Learn From Those Outside the Biz

**Nancy Hill Talks About Conferences, Minority Hiring and How Gender Wasn't a Factor in Getting the Job**

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NEW YORK (AdAge.com) -- When the American Association of Advertising Agencies [this afternoon confirmed](#) Nancy Hill as its new president-CEO, Ms. Hill did something no other 4A's head has ever done: She updated her status on her Facebook page.



Nancy Hill  
Photo Credit: Ric Kallaher

It now says that she is now "officially the president and CEO of the AAAA." (Last week, after Advertising Age first tipped her for the job, her page said she wasn't answering her phone.) It's a small but symbolic gesture demonstrating that Ms. Hill gets what it means to stay [relevant in a rapidly evolving media landscape](#).

Just hours after official appointment, Ms. Hill spoke to AdAge.com about her expectations for the job and how she plans to ensure the 90-year-old organization will stay relevant.

**Ad Age:** You've had a long and varied career in the agency world working at shops big and small, East and West. What made you want to leave it to lead the 4A's?

**Ms. Hill:** First and foremost I love this business. I love the people in this business. When I left Lowe last year I knew this position was out there. They had approached me earlier in the year, and I couldn't do it because I was still committed to Lowe. But they had planted a seed in my head, that this was something I wanted to do. I called them [the 4A's search committee] after I left Lowe and

threw my hat in the ring.

**Ad Age:** Insiders have cited traits like your familiarity with new media and lack of a big ego as helping to propel you to top pick in the 4A's long-running search. What assets do you feel you bring to the position?

**Ms. Hill:** I think I am really good at getting people in a room and getting those people to talk, getting the best out of them. One of things that's really important for this organization is continuing to be an advocate for the industry. That is going to require a lot of conversations between the various constituencies, and that is something I can help bring to the organization.

**Ad Age:** What might you be able to bring to the role as a woman that perhaps your predecessors could not?

**Ms. Hill:** Honestly, I don't think it's a gender issue. What I probably bring that my predecessors do not is my experience at a variety of different agencies. I've worked in digital, I've worked in every type of media. It's less about what I bring from a gender standpoint than what I bring from a background standpoint.

**Ad Age:** What is at the top of your agenda for the organization once you step into the new role?

**Ms. Hill:** This is a massive organization in terms of the things it does and the resources it provides to its constituents -- everything from 401K programs to minority internship programs and educational conferences. It's going to take me a good 90 to 120 days to get my head wrapped around the organization as a whole. After the 120 days it's going to be important to work with our member agencies to identify what's at the top of their agenda before I publicly state my agenda. It's not about my agenda, it's about the organization's agenda.

**Ad Age:** One big issue that comes to mind is minority hiring. Any thoughts on how the 4A's can help to improve the industry's record track record?

**Ms. Hill:** The 4A's has done a lot already, like the minority internship program I was talking about that we not only fund but make sure the agencies are involved in, and also the scholarships at the portfolio schools. There are many other things that we are looking at, including mentorship programs and partnerships at universities.

**Ad Age:** Any thoughts on how you will need to shape the 4A's annual management conference going forward?

**Ms. Hill:** After last year's conference, a group of us started by [TBWA Worldwide CEO] Tom Carroll working with [outgoing President-CEO O. Burtch Drake] and [4As exec VP] Mike Donahue talked about how we would change that conference going forward. We focused a lot on how we look outside our own industry to learn about things we might not be thinking about every day. Instead of a lot of agency heads talking about what's going on at their agencies, we've shifted the agenda to focus more on people and visionaries outside of the industry who we think we can learn something from.

**Ad Age:** So is this your last stop? Your predecessor held the post for 14 years, do you see this as your last job in the business?

**Ms. Hill:** I'm never going to say never. Who knows? The answer to that question is like getting out a magic 8 Ball and asking it a question. One day I might say yes, and one day I might say no. I certainly think it's important to stay close to the agency world because that's how you understand your members' issues.

**Ad Age:** What are you most looking forward to about your new post?

**Ms. Hill:** Just getting out and meeting all the people I don't know in the business. I know a lot of people, but I realize there are a lot I don't and I'm excited about that.

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