

Ashley Thomas

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Innovative and purpose-driven executive with a passion for creating meaningful customer experiences that resonate across cultures and communities. Known for shaping immersive narratives that celebrate diversity and spark connection—across theme parks, exhibits, retail, and digital platforms. Experienced leader with both internal and external teams managing milestones, budgets and big idea goals.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Creative Strategy	Impactful Partnerships	Immersive Storytelling
Team Building & Leadership	Project Execution & Success	Contract Negotiation
Internal Process Design	Global Executive Communications	Program Management

EXPERIENCE

THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY | Washington, DC |

Director, Business Strategy – National Geographic

Jan 2020 – Oct 2024

- Managed creative strategy, budgets, schedules, and deliverables for multiple projects simultaneously, ensuring timely execution and alignment with business goals
- Championed and executed multiple simultaneous brand activations in parks, retail spaces, cruise ships, and digital O&O platforms with creative innovation and collaboration across global teams
- Communicated complex business needs to senior executives and C-Suite, including competitive advantages, legal risks and operational improvements through executive summaries and presentations
- Collaborated with Imagineering teams to envision new guest experiences: Disney Sequia Lodge, Les Mystères du Nautilus, EPCOT Outpost, EPCOT American Adventure Pavilion, EPCOT Festivals, Merchandising
- Identified new external partnership and internal tent pole initiatives to optimize cross-functional revenue opportunities:
- Acted as a corporate ambassador by presenting compelling self-built narratives at high-profile live events, including D23 Expo 2022
- Collaborated with *Storyliving by Disney* production team to create custom programming for new community residents
- Served on the board of the National Geographic PRIDE Berg and developed their first Pride Week parade march and live employee events
- Developed next-gen project management platforms to improve transparency and data-driven reporting for proper corporate finance allocations
- Partnered closely with Lucasfilm Technology to streamline content and project workflows, including migrating 4 digital asset and rights management systems into 1 modern self-serve platform
- Negotiated third-party contracts for content creation and creative/tech vendor services
- Established KPIs, strategic goals and managed department P&L
- Managed the 130+ year old ever-growing photographic and multi-media archive of over 50M assets that serviced all Disney global teams with content to create amazing products and guest experiences
- Oversaw and encouraged a diverse and multidisciplinary team of editors, curators, archivists, and rights experts

Director, Business Strategy & Marketing

June 2019 – Jan 2020

- Led end-to-end development and execution of new creative projects across multiple lines of business, removing barriers and ensuring on-budget, on-time deliverables
- Developed brand guidelines to be shared with external partners and internal teams for best-in-class consistency
- Marketed international world-renowned photographer talent for live commercial opportunities
- Grew content archive utilization to over 500 business units YoY and cut costs by coordinating a multichannel internal awareness campaign
- Outlined changes in visual asset descriptions to reflect modern inclusion terminology
- Retained 200K assets, reduced internal licensing costs by 40%, and preserved brand integrity by negotiating content talent contracts with 400 photographers

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PARTNERS / 21ST CENTURY FOX | Washington, DC

Manager, Business Development

Nov 2018 - June 2019

- Produced and distributed of marketing materials promoting the National Geographic photography collection for distribution on web, print, PR and social media platforms
- Established and ensured brand guidelines for both internal and external clients/media
- Defined extensive business requirements documentation for new multi-million-dollar digital asset management system to house historic and ever-growing archive
- Managed all content: photography, graphics, and video on natgeocreative.com (now inactive), including promotional pages, curated galleries and photographer talent profiles
- Created a branded Instagram feed with 14M followers driving stock licensing revenue, client engagement and talent commercial opportunities

Manager, Marketing

May 2015 - Nov 2018

- Initiated and managed the re-branding of three divisions of National Geographic under one unified and recognizable brand, making it increasingly marketable to clients, press and new talent
- Spearheaded the placement of National Geographic talent (photographers, videographers, NASA Astronauts, Magazine Editor in Chief) to present at SXSW 2017 including the conference keynote
- Managed budgets and deadlines of developers, designers and stakeholders for the redesign of natgeocreative.com, housing a forward-facing collection of 582K images and 88K video assets available for licensing
- Doubled campaign-generated traffic to natgeocreative.com YOY 2014-2015
- Managed outside production vendors-printers, developers, and designers to ensure deadline-driven project deliverables
- Partnered directly with photographers in the field on commercial initiatives including project logistics, creative deliverables, and contractual documentation

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY | Washington, DC

Marketing Specialist

2011 -2015

Sales Assistant

2008 - 2011

Metadata Technician/Cataloger

2006 - 2008

EDUCATION

BA, Art History - University of Colorado, Boulder

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Disney Executive Development Program (Ignite)

Google Analytics Bootcamp

State of AI in DAM - Henry Stewart

Crosswalking Metadata - American Society of Archivists

TECH TOOLS

Adobe Creative Cloud

Lucidchart

Google Analytics

Salesforce

Airtable

Asana

Rightsline

Keynote & Powerpoint

Google Analytics
