



FIFTH ESTATER

BY JOEL TOPCIK

The Man Behind the Headliners

Veteran TV agent Glantz keeps the volume low at Headline Media

In his 20 years as a media talent agent, it hasn't escaped Michael Glantz that his profession has something of an image problem. "I often say to prospective clients, 'Look, agents are normally perceived as the lowest form of life,'" he says. "So many people in this business aren't that honest." His pitch: "I'm not smart enough to remember my lies. So it's just so much easier to be honest."



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That candor, along with his own background in TV news, has inspired the loyalty of Glantz's longtime clients, including CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer, ABC Sports announcer Brad Nessler and *Today* co-host Meredith Vieira. At Headline Media Management, the New York-based boutique agency he co-founded three years ago, Glantz has established a refuge from big shops like N.S. Bienstock and IMG for news and sports media talent.

A Bronx, N.Y., native, Glantz got his start in the TV business as an intern at WCBS in 1978. He was hired as a desk assistant and became a field producer before heading up to Boston in 1982 to produce sports and special projects at NBC affiliate WNEV (now WHDH).

Glantz returned to New York for a brief, ill-fitting stint as news director at the nascent MTV. "I was *so* out of my element," he recalls. "I wasn't a rock 'n' roller, and they weren't ready to do television in the way that I was looking to do."

He was producing affiliate news at NBC when he decided that being an agent offered "more-tangible" work than news production. Glantz joined IMG, where he signed sportscasters Greg Gumbel and Dick Vitale. Later, he developed a news

clientele at the boutique agency Athletes and Artists, where he forged a lasting relationship with CNN "before anyone took them seriously."

Despite his efforts to stay out of his clients' spotlights, Glantz found himself in the news in 1993 after he brokered a record \$650,000 deal for the rights to a TV film about the Stolpas, a young couple who survived eight days in a Nevada blizzard. In 1996, he scored a landmark deal that enabled CNN's Christiane Amanpour to moonlight as a *60 Minutes* contributor—and set the stage for CNN's Anderson Cooper to do the same 10 years later.

Many of Glantz's clients stuck with him after Athletes and Artists became The Marquee Group, then SFX Media Group, and was purchased by Clear Channel. In January 2004, along with partners Lou Oppenheim, Janet Pawson and Carol Leff, Glantz bought back the agency and established Headline Media.

As a low-volume agency, Headline strives to be more attentive to a relatively small group of clients, many of whom Glantz considers close friends. "A lot of my competitors have so many more clients," he says. "I don't know that any of them have better clients. My clients are some of the nicest people—and in this business, not everybody's very nice."

"A HANDS-ON, FULL-SERVICE AGENT"

Ownership has also allowed Glantz to devote more time to coaching neighborhood sports teams. Indeed, it was on the soccer field that he became friendly with neighbor Vieira, whose sons played on Glantz's team.

Long wary of agents who were "too pushy," Vieira joined in 1997 and became his most prominent client when she succeeded Katie Couric at *Today* in a \$10 million-\$12 million deal last April. "He stands up for me," she says, "sometimes when I'm unable to, but without being, in my estimation, a jerk."

CNN's Blitzer calls Glantz "a hands-on, full-service agent who's always there."

A technophile who used to wire friends' houses for cable, Glantz uses 13 DVRs to record and review his clients' on-air work, and he regularly offers feedback.

Although the changing economics of the business has meant working "twice as hard to make half as much," Glantz says having his own agency has been, well, fun: "It's the first time I can say that in all the years I've been doing this." ❏

PROFILE: MICHAEL GLANTZ

TITLE: President/Co-Founder, Headline Media Management

EDUCATION: B.S., CUNY Baccalaureate, Graduate School of the City University of New York

EMPLOYMENT: WCBS New York: intern, 1978; desk assistant/researcher/associate producer/field producer, 1978-82;

WNEV Boston: producer, 1982-83; MTV: director of news programming, 1983-84; WNBC New York: producer, 1985-86; IMG: director of broadcasting, 1986-89; Athletes and Artists (a.k.a. The Marquee Group and SFX Media): senior VP, 1990-2004; current position since January 2004

PERSONAL: B. Jan. 25, 1959, Bronx, N.Y.; married, three children