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REDS-COUT'S JONAH DISEND TO STEP DOWN AS CHAIRMAN IN 2020 TO FOCUS ON NEW PRODUCTION COMPANY

L.A.-based Complementary Colors will develop content for TV and film while advising culture-driven brands



By [Lindsay Rittenhouse](#). Published on December 24, 2019.



Jonah Disend, who is launching Complementary Colors, is stepping down as chairman of Redscout Credit: Submitted

MDC Partners-owned Redscout's Jonah Disend is planning to step down in 2020 as chairman of the strategy and design firm he founded to embark on yet another venture, this time in television and film.

"As the first Scout, Jonah paved our way to unlocking big brand questions and challenges, and we are grateful for his leadership over the years," says Redscout Partner-CEO Ivan Kayser. "We can't wait to see him flourish in his next chapter."

The new venture, called Complementary Colors, is self-described as a cultural production company that will develop content for TV and film. Disend says it also advises companies looking to build "true culturally significant brands."

Disend, a former planning director for DDB, founded Redscout in his New York apartment in 2000 and served as CEO until he passed that title to Colin Chow in January 2018 and moved into the role of chairman. He says he stayed at Redscout "way longer than I ever imagined, but it was great."

Now, Disend says he is simply "ready for something new."

Heading up Complementary Colors is not only a professional pivot, but a personal one, as well—Disend has moved back to Los Angeles (where he lived before coming to New York to open Redscout) to lead the company. He says he is currently the "lone operator" of Complementary Colors.

Disend calls himself an "accidental advertising person," as he started his career in theater as a producer and director. He earned his Bachelor's degree in dramatic literature from Washington University, his Master's in performance from New York University and once told Ad Age about his self-led production of Hamlet in the third grade that was ultimately shut down by the school for being a "little inappropriate." So, in a sense, he's returning to his roots with the formation of Complementary Colors.

Like his approach with Redscout—in which Disend reinvented the way agencies traditionally operate by focusing on the core product or service of a company, then using marketing to amplify it—Disend says he will look for unique and innovative ways to develop content for TV and film.

A project already underway for Complementary Colors includes the co-production of "Mayday," described by Deadline as a fantastical female-driven action film starring Juliette Lewis, Grace Van Patten and Mia Goth. Disend has also been advising clients like Hoxie, a wine spritzer he calls "the White Claw for wine lovers," and Sister, a global content

company founded by media mogul Elisabeth Murdoch, Hollywood studio exec Stacey Snider and British television producer Jane Featherstone.

Snider tells Ad Age that Sister's goal is to "make super premium TV and film projects," and that Disend has helped her and her business partners craft their brand.

"Jonah helped us, before we launched, talk about our vision and values," Snider says. "It was not about thinking about the kind of surface issues and ambitions we had for the company; [he] was enabling us to probe deeper."

To call him a consultant, she says, wouldn't "quite" do his role justice. "He's a thought partner," Snider explains. "He was someone who we welcomed into our conversations. He helped get us to a place where we had a brand ambition."

She says Sister continues to work with Disend, post launch.

Disend says what kept him at Redscout for so long was watching the people he trained grow into leaders. He says knowing when to walk away from a business so it can continue to grow and evolve is a critical trait in a company founder. However, Disend admits "getting out of the way" wasn't the easiest decision, but it was right. "It was an adjustment for me to [realize] just because [something] is not the way I would do it, doesn't mean it's not right," he says.

"I learned so much about teaching," Disend adds of his last years at Redscout, and will continue "mentoring" the team there when needed. But, for him, it's time to go back to learning.

"I've had to learn a whole new vocabulary, transition into this business in a new way," Disend says of starting Complementary Colors. "I've learned more in the past year than I have in awhile."

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