

## BofA forum brings vendors and corporations together

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is 15 percent.

"We are well on the road to our goal of 15 percent spend," Taylor said. "Obviously, it's part of our business outreach. As a community bank, it's our

duty to reach out to businesses in this community."

While the forum brought BofA executives and vendors together, vendors also connected with each other.

The bank sponsored a busi-

ness fair at the Charlotte Convention Center where suppliers will connect with BofA sourcing and supplier managers, executives, colleagues and industry peers.

## Debra Lee takes charge at BET

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BET Jazz, BET Gospel and BET Hip Hop.

"Debra has been the architect with me, if you will, of BET's success," said retired founder Robert Johnson in a telephone interview from Washington D.C. "She has held every senior strategic position in the company. She has helped define the company and she's helped direct the company."

The network now reaches more than 80 million households in the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean, according to Nielsen Media Research, with 2005 its most-watched year ever, representing a 17 percent increase in viewership over the previous year.

"When I went to BET, I was so excited about working for a black-owned company and a company that was in the media business that serves the black community," Lee said. "One thing Harvard Law does is teach you that you can change the world, and I knew I wanted to do that, it was just a question of how."

Born in Columbia, S.C., and raised in Greensboro, Lee had her sights on a career in journalism. But by the time she started her undergraduate work at Brown University, law took center stage.

In 1980, Lee moved to Washington D.C. hoping to parlay her legal career into government work. She decided to take a job at the prestigious law firm Steptoe & Johnson, planning "to hide out until the Democrats came back into office."

But she would never get her shot in a Democratic White House.

"BET was a client at the firm," said Lee, "and I found communications something that I really loved and I started working with BET. Five years in, Bob asked if I could come on board...and the rest is history."

Of course there were moments when she questioned the move.

"Oh, there were times when I said, 'Did I make the right decision,'" she laughed. "Going from a firm of 200 lawyers where everyone appreciates the law and everyone understands

the law to a company which had, I think, 80 employees, none of whom were lawyers and they didn't care. They just knew they had to get something on the air tomorrow night."

What kept her committed was the diversity the company offered. "I was working on all kinds of projects," Lee said, which included now-defunct publishing, clothing and restaurant enterprises. "Every six months we were starting something new."

Lee is now looking to develop scripted series for the channel. Last year she tapped Hollywood producer-director Reginald Hudlin to helm the effort - a hire heralded by many in the industry as a further sign of Lee's executive acumen.

"If she does nothing else than hire Reg Hudlin, Debra Lee will be a huge success," said Johnathan Rodgers, president and CEO of the black lifestyle network TV One, noting Hudlin's Hollywood credentials that feature movies and television series including "House Party," "The Bernie Mac Show," "Everybody Hates Chris" and the adult animated "The Boondocks."

"It was a statement to the creative community," said Rodgers, "and a statement to America that they were no longer going to be stuck in comic and video programming. That, in fact, they were going to give the audience much more, and we all benefit from that."

BET's programming could benefit from the upcoming merger between its Viacom sister UPN and The WB into The CW network, with some of UPN's slate of black-oriented shows likely to be displaced in the deal. But BET spokesman Michael Lewellen says "it's too early to speculate about the fate of UPN shows since no one has seen a formal rollout of the CW programming plan."

Lee is currently looking to further the franchise beyond television to magazine and book publishing. Also, BET Mobile will provide content for cell phones.

"I have to answer the question of where do we take this brand from here on out," Lee mused

## Shutterbugs look beyond prints

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whose Sierra Custom Design studio in Bishop, Calif., transfers photos onto ceramic tile to add sparkle to Jacuzzi rooms, restaurant murals, tabletops and fireplace mantels.

"It's functional art versus just decorative art. People like to touch it. It's a little more personal."

While film processing generated just \$3.9 billion last year, compared with \$6.2 billion in 2000, digital printing - including consumables used at home - churned out an estimated \$3 billion more in sales, said Dimitrios Delis, research director at the Jackson, Mich.-based Photo Marketing Association.

In addition, putting images on wood, stone, plastic and metal as well as paper of all kinds - birthday cards, calendars and storytelling photo books that "people actually use instead of just keeping around for storage or display" - brought in an extra \$1.5 billion, Delis guessed.

The digital revolution has sidelined film, and the reverberations are being felt worldwide. Film behemoths led by Rochester-based Eastman Kodak Co. are racing to transform themselves into catchall digital players but relying more than ever on high-margin inks, chemicals and paper that go into making prints.

To get there, they must battle head-on with consumer electronics heavyweights like Sony Corp. and Hewlett-Packard Co. in the rapidly evolving digital camera market. The latest camera models, even the cheapest ones, have improved to the point where picture quality is mostly taken for granted - sending the crowd looking for extras beyond megapixel resolution and liquid-crystal-display screens.

"We're at an inflection point where the easy stuff, putting

cameras in people's hands, is winding down," said Chris Chute of IDC, a market research firm in suburban Boston. "Now it's going to take skill, innovation, a lot of creativity, to make money off of all these cameras. It may mean printing personalized coffee-table books, managing your own photo archive

online, finding new ways to share pictures on displays."

In under a decade, digital cameras have landed in just over half of the nation's 110 million households. That penetration could reach 55 percent to 60 percent this year and top out at around 70 percent by 2009, analysts say.

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### Why Are You Afraid?

One of the biggest obstacles to achieving our dreams is our concern over what others may think about our dreams. When we finally realize what it is that we really want out of life, we almost automatically begin to wonder about what other people will say about our dreams.

As a result, we often hesitate in pursuing our goals. We may even decide to put off our dreams, thinking that there may be a better time to get started. This thinking is actually another way to keep others from knowing about our dreams because we are afraid of what they may say.

However, one of the things to keep in mind is that no matter what we may attempt, there are always going to be those who will criticize what we are doing. There will always be someone to tell you that what you are doing is foolish, silly, unwise or unrealistic.

Fortunately, there have also been those who despite what others may have said to them to discourage them from pursuing their dreams, who went ahead anyway. If it had not been for the determination of these dreamers to go after their dreams in spite of what others may have said, we would not have many of the things that we have today and enjoy and now take for granted.

Indeed, although you must not overly concern yourself with the opinions of others about your dreams, it is wise to be careful in deciding the ones with whom you share your dreams. There would be no point or benefit in telling others about your dreams whom you know will only criticize and shoot them down. Do choose carefully the ones you tell about your aspirations. Share them with others who will encourage you and understand what it means to go after your heart's desire.

But in the meantime, if you happen to run into those who would pull you down and speak ill of your dreams, just remember that it really does not matter what others may think about your dreams. What really matters is that you have found something that you really want and that you are willing to go after it. What really matters is having the courage to go after your dreams in the face of those you would try to hold you back. But in the end, it does not really matter what others may say, because you have the power to make your dream come true!

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