

Power *players*

POWER JOURNALIST

The Verdict Is In

DAN ABRAMS KNOWS RIGHT from wrong—and he's not shy about saying so. As the host of MSNBC's newly relaunched and expanded *Verdict With Dan Abrams* (weekdays at 9 P.M.), the 42-year-old chief legal correspondent for NBC News and former network general manager deems it his responsibility to "cover the big stories of the day in politics, law, and pop culture through the eyes of a lawyer," a branding tactic that sets his show apart from other competitive news-driven programs.

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Abrams—son of renowned attorney Floyd Abrams, an expert on constitutional law—began his career at Court TV (reporting on the O.J. Simpson and Dr. Kevorkian trials) and subsequently became a member of the NBC family, where he's been ever since—first in sports, then as a correspondent and anchor, next as general manager, and finally, back on-air where he belongs. "I decided to become GM because it was a unique opportunity, and I had numerous thoughts on how the network could improve," he



Dan Abrams.

says. "It was a fantastic experience. Ultimately, though, when the nine o'clock hour became available, I couldn't turn it down. You can't turn down prime time: With the election around the corner and the network on the rise, this prime-time opportunity was too tempting."

Now, from behind his desk in a top time slot, Abrams, who counts Tom Brokaw and Jack Ford among his industry inspirations, focuses on the upcoming presidential election—a responsibility he relishes. "What's surprised me most in this election is the amount of national interest and passion," he says. "I'm particularly excited about it because I'm

so passionate about it." So what is Abrams' forecast for November? "I don't pretend to be a political insider, so I can't predict who will win," he says. "The unique element that I bring to the table in this campaign is the fact-checking element. I demand intellectual honesty from the candidates and expose their misstatements."

What then, in Abrams' opinion, was the most grievous gaffe in the Democratic race? "Hillary Clinton's comment about being under sniper fire in Bosnia," he says. "But Obama has made some big misstatements too, and it's my job to evaluate their hypocrisy."—EMILY LIEBERT