

CableFAX Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Chosen 4: Comcast Names First Minority Nets to Launch Under NBCU Conditions

The wait is over. **Comcast** announced the first of 10 independently owned-and-operated nets it has committed to launch over the next 8 years as one of the conditions of the **NBCU** transaction. Out of the more than 100 proposals submitted, who got golden tickets? *Magic Johnson's Aspire*, an African-American net that **GMC** was hired to help with; **Revolt**, a music and pop culture offering from *Sean Diddy Combs* and **MTV** vet *Andy Schuon*; **El Rey**, an English for Latino and general audiences net proposed by Hollywood director *Robert Rodriguez* and **FactoryMade Ventures** execs *John Fogelman* and *Cristina Patwa*; and **BabyFirst Americas**, a spinoff of **BabyFirst TV** proposed by Spanish language TV vet *Constantino "Said" Schwarz*. Comcast said the nets would receive "broad" distribution. GMC CEO *Charles Humbar* said that carriage for *Aspire* would include most of Comcast's top markets via its digital 1 tier and *BabyFirst Americas* vp, programming *Mario Solis-Marich* said his net would be getting just under 10mln Comcast HHs through the deal (*BabyFirst TV* has about 25mln HHs through **DISH** and **DirecTV**, with the flagship net set to carry some of the same original programming created for *BabyFirst Americas*). Bilingual *BabyFirst Americas* will have some Latino culturally specific programming, but that won't be the entirety of its lineup. It's set to be the first of the 4 nets to roll out, with its launch slated for Apr. One of the shows in the works is "Super Carlos," which teaches nutrition alongside imagination—ie, while Carlos' mom is at the grocery store choosing corn and papaya, his imagination takes over and he's visiting the Aztecs and the rainforest. "Latino children have only about 25% of the vocabulary than their non-Latino counterparts. Everybody has told us that this is the issue that dogs many of these children throughout their scholastic careers," Solis-Marich said. "We understand we're not the entire solution, but we hope we give these parents a tool they can use." *El Rey* (The King) is another net in the Hispanic category, with launch currently set for Jan '14 (Comcast has said 2 of the 10 indie nets will be majority American Latino-owned and two will be operated by American Latino programmers). Calling the Comcast deal a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, Fogelman was frank about the application process. "It was a long and arduous experience," he said. "For the Hispanic category, we had to be approved by 40 Hispanic organizations around the country. It wasn't just the Comcast group—and when we say Comcast, it's not just Comcast Cable, but the parent company too. This was a long, long journey." Patwa said Comcast was "really hands on" in helping to figure out an agreement that would allow the net to succeed while ensuring that there was a commitment to see it through. Comcast has committed to launching 4 majority African-American owned nets, a category *Revolt* and *Aspire* both fall under. *Revolt* didn't make any execs available for this article, but pointed to a video blog by Combs (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgyyR3t5Qdl>). "When I was growing up I used to wonder why those people didn't look like me or talk like me or walk like me, so thank you to Comcast. My hat goes off to you for being the first to step up," he said. "And I also would like to encourage and invite **Time Warner**, **DirecTV**, **Cablevision** and all the other distributors to come and get down with the get down because *Revolt TV* is bringing the revolution that television needs." Combs' video also included a slide at the end thanking those who came before him,



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Our Top Ops list will be honored in CableFAX: The Magazine's July issue and during an awards luncheon in September coinciding with CableFAX's annual Program Awards.



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specifically naming *Don Cornelius, Bob Johnson, Cathy Hughes and Oprah Winfrey*. Revolt's slated to launch next year. Aspire is described as an African-American net designed to entertain, inform and inspire through a diverse slate of original and acquired programming in the categories of movies, docs, short films, music, comedy, visual and performing arts and faith and inspirational programs (summer '12 launch). "We've been a part of the process since Day 1," Humbard said of GMC's involvement, noting that parent Intermedia has worked with Johnson through *Vibe* and *Uptown* magazines. GMC will handle affil sales, marketing and operations for the channel. "We've already started meetings with other distributors. As this was coming down, we gave them the heads up that there might be something really special to talk about really soon. And I think starting today we can really have serious discussions about how this channel can really go to work for them," Humbard said, adding that he expects you'll see Aspire together with GMC at the **Cable Show** in May. Comcast evp *David Cohen* took to the company's blog Tues to note that the company's already ahead of schedule in fulfilling independent programming commitments. Next week, Comcast issues its 1st annual report to the **FCC** on the NBCU transaction.

Digital Floodgates: Comcast's entering the burgeoning subscription streaming content arena once dominated by **Netflix**, announcing **Xfinity Streampix** will launch this week through deals with **Disney-ABC, NBCU, Sony Pictures, Warner Bros** and **Cookie Jar** for programming such as "Brokeback Mountain," "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" and past full season of shows including "30 Rock" and "Lost." Initially available to CMCSA subs anywhere via TV, online and mobile devices and expected to hit the **Xbox** and **Android** platforms going forward, Streampix will be included as part of various Xfinity 3-play and HSD packages, and as a \$4.99 service with other packages. Comcast's pitching the service as a past-content complement to its other offerings including **XfinityTV.com**, mobile TV app and **AnyPlay** for live, in-home TV viewing, and says it's chiefly about more than different programming. For example, older TV shows from the '70s through the '00s. Said Comcast Video Services svp/GM *Marcien Jenckes* in a blog post: "Xfinity TV and Streampix combined provide a one-stop solution for all of their video entertainment needs across screens." **Wells Fargo Securities' Marci Ryvicker** views Streampix "as a positive for both cable and media as it protects the current ecosystem (and affiliate fee model)."

NCTC Winter Conference: Attendance is up over last year for **NCTC's** Winter Conference in Austin, with total attendance at 485. During Mon's opening session, **SCTE** took the wrap off a new videoconferencing program as it detailed the progress of its Smart Energy Management Initiative with pres/CEO *Mark Dzuban* speaking from PA. However, due to some problems with the Austin Hilton internal network, attendees only (save for a few minutes) got the audio feed. "It's very ironic that there are problems with the power, considering the topic of our conversation today," joked *Derek DiGiacomo*, sr dir/Information Systems & Energy Management Programs at SCTE. But it's all good, as SEMI is moving forward and cable companies know they need to do more to decrease their overall energy consumption. DiGiacomo said network energy costs are hitting about \$1bln/ year now and will ratchet up to \$1.5bln within the next few years. DiGiacomo projected a **SCTE/NCTA/CableLabs**-branded energy strategy by year's end. Expect plenty more details next month at SCTE's SEMI Forum in Philly. **CableFAX** columnist *Steve Effros* keynoted Tues' lunch, offering up several predictions—from networks negotiating retrans directly with cable ops rather than affils ("why do you want to deal with someone who is taking half your money?") to "reverse must carry" (broadcasters must show they are delivering a signal to every viewer in their market—not relying on cable to do so—or risk losing spectrum and the ability to charge for retrans). As for streaming startup **Aereo**, Effros kiddingly suggested ops in the area hire a helicopter and fly close to its thumbnail antenna array in

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Brooklyn. "It's just a little multipath distortion," he noted, once again predicting the Aereo dog just won't hunt.

Carriage: BlueHighways TV inked a distribution deal with NCTC giving the org's complete membership access to the net. -- HRTV completed a carriage pact with TeleChannel, a distributor of nets to IPTV service providers. -- EWTN Global Catholic Net's transitioning its 4 North American services to Galaxy 15, Transponder 5 beginning Mar 1. To avoid delivery disruption, EWTN will provide various dual illumination periods. Go to EWTN.com/G15 for more info.

In the States: According to Sanford Bernstein's Craig Moffett, recent regulatory filings make it almost certain Google will enter the pay-TV market in Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri," the domain of Time Warner Cable. -- Bend-Broadband subs now have access to HBO Go and Max Go. Synacor's handling the integration and authentication. -- WOW! intro'd Ultra TV, a branded service using the Arris Whole Home Solution consisting of a multi-services platform providing integrated multimedia ent to the entire home and Moxi Players, which connect to each TV. -- Cass Cable TV migrated to Avail-TVN's MPEG-4 linear TV service featuring a litany of SD and HD programming.

Retrans: Less than a year after sidestepping a retrans impasse in the Mobile-Pensacola area, Cox and LIN are careening toward a Feb 29 deadline covering deals for stations in New England markets including Providence and New Haven-Hartford. Both parties say they're working toward a resolution. -- DISH reached a retrans pact with Louisiana Media covering New Orleans Fox affil WVUE after an approx 1-month standoff.

Advertising/Marketing: Verizon FiOS expanded to NYC, Philadelphia, Dallas/Fort Worth and L.A. a multimedia ad campaign it tested in DC targeting trend-setting young professionals residing in MDUs. Included: immersive digital ads combined with social media engagement and a concentrated presence at events and venues such as gyms, restaurants and bars. -- A Neuro-Insight study commissioned by Bravo concluded that the brain regions responsible for long-term memories are activated at significantly higher levels when TV ads are aired during programs with related content. The highest level of efficacy was observed when viewers watched customized vignettes—or ads combining cast members, clips or other show elements directly with a sponsor's brand message.

VOD: Comcast Media Center will allow its HITS affils access to its cloud-based CDN offering thousands of VOD titles. CMC plans to lower MSOs' transport costs with a central VOD library letting ops select certain titles for individual markets.

Multiplatform: Netflix's new licensing pact with The Weinstein Company includes streaming rights to foreign language, docs and certain other movies, and features NFLX as the pay TV debut site for Academy Award-nominated film "The Artist." -- Outcast will deliver daily news updates from Fox News to more than 13K nationwide gas station screens.

Programming: Discovery Channel's "Frozen Planet," a jv with the BBC, premieres with 2 eps on Mar 18, after which 1 ep will air weekly until the series concludes Apr 15 with the final 2.

Honors: HBO, CBS and ABC tied for the most NAACP Image Awards victories with 3 each, while cable led broadcast, 13-8. TBS' 2 wins included a Outstanding Comedy Series nod for "Tyler Perry's House of Payne" and BET's pair featured Outstanding Actor and Actress in a Comedy Series nods for "Reed Between the Lines." Other winning nets: OWN (2), NBC (2), TV One (1), TNT (1), Lifetime (1) and Nickelodeon (1).

LIntastic: We're glad MSG and Time Warner Cable's deal late Fri didn't put the kibosh on Mon's Comedy Central "Daily Show" segment on the blackout. If you missed it, watch it here: <http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/mon-february-20-2012/lindecision-2012>

People: Tim Bruno was upped to svp, event productions, talent dev & studio relations for Viacom Ent Group. -- Weather Channel named Keith Pardy as CMO, a new post for the company. Pardy recently served as chief marketing officer at Re-

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

search In Motion. -- *Mary Murano*, most recently evp, TV nets distribution for **NBCU**, joined **Schoen Marketing**, where she is opening a 2nd office in NYC. -- **Discovery Comm** tapped *Courtney Menzel* as svp, domestic distribution, effective Mar 1.

Public Affairs: **C-SPAN's** 8th annual StudentCam video competition garnered a record 1203 entries this year, with the natl grand prize winner to be announced Mar 7. In all, 75 winning entries will be awarded various cash prizes totaling \$50K. With the theme, "The Constitution and You: Select any provision of the US Constitution and create a video illustrating why it's important to you," issues surrounding the 1st and 2nd Amendments led the list of issues chosen by students.

On the Circuit: **FCC** chmn *Julius Genachowski* will appear at **ACA Summit** on Mar 14 in DC for a conversation with ACA pres/CEO *Matt Polka*. This year's Summit is slated for Mar 13-15 at the Grand Hyatt.

Business/Finance: **Ericsson** agreed to acquire 100% of the shares of privately-held **BelAir Networks**, a Canadian WiFi company counting **Comcast**, **Time Warner Cable** and **Cablevision** among its clients. -- In response to reports it's shopping its set-top unit, **Cisco** said in a blog post: "we love set top boxes." The company also cited recent comments from chmn/CEO *John Chambers* reflecting a commitment to the unit.

CableFAX Daily Stockwatch

Company	02/21 Close	1-Day Ch	Company	02/21 Close	1-Day Ch
BROADCASTERS/DBS/MMDS					
DIRECTV:	45.15	0.17	CLEARWIRE:	2.17	(0.04)
DISH:	28.76	(0.26)	CONCURRENT:	3.83	0.05
DISNEY:	41.57	(0.18)	CONVERGYS:	13.19	(0.07)
GE:	19.41	0.13	CSG SYSTEMS:	16.28	0.15
NEWS CORP:	20.21	(0.04)	ECHOSTAR:	30.82	(0.96)
MSOS					
CABLEVISION:	15.33	(0.04)	GOOGLE:	614.00	9.36
CHARTER:	62.70	(0.15)	HARMONIC:	6.25	(0.08)
COMCAST:	29.07	(0.1)	INTEL:	27.16	(0.21)
COMCAST SPCL:	28.25	(0.14)	JDSU:	14.60	(0.33)
GCI:	11.07	(0.29)	LEVEL 3:	21.24	(0.01)
KNOLLOGY:	15.99	(0.09)	MICROSOFT:	31.44	0.19
LIBERTY GLOBAL:	48.45	(0.87)	MOTOROLA MOBILITY:	39.74	0.04
LIBERTY INT:	18.07	0.04	RENTRAK:	22.20	0.39
SHAW COMM:	20.16	0.07	SEACHANGE:	6.99	(0.07)
TIME WARNER CABLE:	76.66	(1)	SONY:	20.66	0.06
VIRGIN MEDIA:	25.27	(0.17)	SPRINT NEXTEL:	2.27	(0.03)
WASH POST:	388.66	(6.73)	THOMAS & BETTS:	71.91	(0.02)
PROGRAMMING					
AMC NETWORKS:	44.45	(0.86)	TIVO:	11.79	(0.23)
CBS:	29.54	(0.05)	UNIVERSAL ELEC:	18.99	(0.7)
CROWN:	1.20	UNCH	VONAGE:	2.51	0.06
DISCOVERY:	44.61	(0.61)	YAHOO:	14.75	(0.26)
GRUPO TELEVISIA:	20.82	(0.44)	TELCOS		
HSN:	35.63	(1.17)	AT&T:	30.34	0.33
INTERACTIVE CORP:	45.96	0.15	VERIZON:	38.49	0.03
LIONSGATE:	12.31	0.27	MARKET INDICES		
LODGENET:	3.69	0.25	DOW:	12965.69	15.82
NEW FRONTIER:	1.15	0.05	NASDAQ:	2948.57	(3.21)
OUTDOOR:	7.03	(0.31)	S&P 500:	1362.21	0.98
SCRIPPS INT:	44.27	0.28			
TIME WARNER:	37.57	(0.13)			
VALUEVISION:	1.90	0.22			
VIACOM:	54.33	(0.46)			
WWE:	9.56	(0.13)			
TECHNOLOGY					
ADVANTAGE:	2.18	0.05			
ALCATEL LUCENT:	2.57	0.12			
AMDOCS:	30.75	0.07			
AMPHENOL:	56.41	0.10			
AOL:	18.63	(0.1)			
APPLE:	514.85	12.73			
ARRIS GROUP:	11.68	(0.14)			
AVID TECH:	11.74	(0.07)			
BLNDER TONGUE:	1.39	(0.01)			
BROADCOM:	37.97	0.31			
CISCO:	20.36	0.07			



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CableFAX Roundtable

Customer Knows Best

This month, **CableFAX** chatted up MSOs on the never-ending quest to improve customer service—from combating negative stereotypes to keeping one step ahead of fast-changing technology. And we couldn't help but ask about their own strangest customer experience stories. Joining this month's roundtable are **Charter** svp, customer experience *John Birrer*; **Comcast** svp, customer experience *Tom Karinshak*; **Cox** vp, customer care *Scott Wise* and **Suddenlink** svp, customer experience *Gibbs Jones*. For more from the discussion, including how social media is being used, visit **CableFAX.com**.



John Birrer



Gibbs Jones



Tom Karinshak



Scott Wise

Talk to me about the “cable guy.” What do you think consumers associate with those words and how are you combating negative stereotypes?

John Birrer: I don't think of us as the “cable guy”—we haven't been him for a long time. The perception is about the old history of not showing up on time, any problem being the customer's issue, and us doing the customer a favor by allowing them to do business with us. We're long past taking the customer for granted. The way to change this is by doing things like executing on a 2-hour arrival window and delivering a great customer experience. We are doing this today, but I believe we need to go a step further and let our customers know we are willing to put skin in the game around our promises. We're talking about a service guarantee which gives us the opportunity to talk about what we're already delivering.

Tom Karinshak: The difference between today and 10 years ago is like the Commodore 64 compared to the iPad. Today, we have the support infrastructure in place to meet our customers' needs 24x7 and keep them satisfied. We're focused on making it incredibly easy for the customer—from offering one- and two-hour appointment windows backed by our customer guarantee to be on-time and fix the issue the first time, to bringing the power of self-service to customers' fingertips with new online, social and mobile account tools. Our techs participate in 80 hours a year of training—that's the equivalent of two full weeks of in-depth, hands-on training on products, services and the in-home customer experience. At Comcast, it's not enough to install our products, our techs need to help customers understand how to use to them to get the most value.

Gibbs Jones: It begins with professionalism. We aim to have the best-trained technical workforce in the industry. In July 2010, we became the first major cable operator to have all broadband technicians and installers earn one or more

professional certifications from SCTE. We're very proud of that. We believe it's also important to treat the customer right—and that often involves taking care of what some might consider the small things, like having our techs put on booties before they enter a home and cleaning up a customer's equipment before they leave. Those are just some examples of our efforts.

Scott Wise: I think in every industry there is humor and stereotypes when it comes to advertising. Certainly in telecommunications we see plenty of this. Cox's greatest asset against negative stereotypes is definitely our people. Whether they are in the customer's home, talking to customers over the phone or online, or in one of our retail locations, our employees' goal is to interact with our customers in an honest, respectful and professional manner. We have a long-standing commitment to the communities we serve. Our technicians and representatives play a key role in delivering on our commitment to our customers. These efforts have served us well over the years and resulted in Cox being the recipient of 26 J.D. Power & Associates awards.

Are there myths you feel like you have to dispel about call centers?

Wise: Absolutely! Myth #1: “I'm going to be transferred multiple times to get my issue resolved!” Reality: We have multi-product skilled representatives whose goal is to resolve every call in one interaction. They are well trained on supporting video, voice and data, so they can handle any technical problems our customers are facing. Myth #2: “Call Center reps don't care about me, they just want to get me off the phone!” Reality: Cox emphasizes the need for First Call Resolution for our customers, meaning our representatives take the time to resolve each issue on the first call and in a timely manner.

Jones: I'd say a common myth is that dealing with a call center is a frustrating experience. But I'm confident our

CableFAX Roundtable

people help dispel that myth with every call. Our shared goal is to make the experience as easy as possible on every customer. That's why none of our reps handle customer calls by themselves until they've completed an average of six weeks of training.

Karinshak: One misconception I'd like to debunk is the myth that the telephone is the only tool an agent uses. Comcast agents are highly trained. They troubleshoot calls using email, phone, and knowledge management systems to overcome complex issues. When agents receive a call, they have the ability to quickly maneuver through a series of pages and screens to get to the product or service information they need in order to effectively resolve the customer's issue. Some customer issues even require the agents to navigate through several applications at one time. We are in a place where our call centers are really evolving. We believe in investing in our employees. And the best way to provide a great customer experience is to provide our agents with smart technology that will enable them to quickly and effectively address a customer inquiry or issue.

Birrer: The biggest myth is that call centers are a commodity that you can easily outsource to a third party. At end of the day, our business is about taking care of our customers. Interesting that some businesses would not consider this a key element and a core competency. That's certainly not the case with a subscription business where it's all about taking care of the customer and their recurring revenue.

How do you prepare your customer service team for the never-ending advancements in tech—from Smart-TVs, new tablet apps, home security offerings, etc?

Wise: Training, training and more training! We meticulously plan for scheduled, as well as unscheduled, training every week and month of the year. Plus, whenever possible, we give our employees an opportunity to test and use our products in the call centers, as well as in their own homes in some instances, so they truly can become experts on them which benefits our customers.

Karinshak: This is the fastest innovation cycle Comcast has experienced and the industry has ever seen, so making sure our team is properly trained and has access to information about new products and services is more critical than ever. We plan to tremendously increase the amount of training hours our agents receive... This requires cross company collaboration from our marketing, operations and customer service teams. Most importantly, we are upgrading the tools our employees use to provide them with information at their fingertips.

What can cable do that satellite ops and telcos can't?

Jones: We're able to provide the convenience of a true,

one-call, one-bill bundle that most of our competitors can't offer. We provide Internet speeds the competition can't match. And we're hyper-local. Our people live and work in the communities we serve; they're neighbors and friends to many of our customers—and I think that gives us a major competitive advantage.

Wise: Additionally, many of our employees also volunteer their time and represent Cox in a variety of local, non-profit organizations.

Karinshak: Other companies have multiple networks, but Comcast has ONE converged network. This allows us to deploy cross-platform services faster than ever while providing a consistent experience regardless of how or where a customer is accessing our services. We've also built a common services layer on our network that handles literally tens of millions of transactions daily—including orders, activations, device updates, bill presentment and bill payment.

Birrer: Our Internet product has a power advantage over our competitors. However, the power technology will evolve and ultimately, the consumer's going to select and be loyal to the company that gives them the best service. And frankly, no one in our space, satellite, cable or telco, has gotten that right yet. In reality, we're competing against every company the consumer does business with; not just within our sector. It's how we compare against the top tier of service providers overall, and it is an area of focus and opportunity for us.

Weirdest customer service experience?

Birrer: After 23 years in the customer service business, nothing surprises me, anymore.

Wise: I'm sure our representatives could give many examples of unique customer experiences they've had. One such experience that comes to mind actually occurred a few weeks ago in our Virginia call center. After receiving great customer service, the customer sang a verse of Bette Midler's "Wind Beneath My Wings" to the representative and then thanked the representative profusely. That's something that doesn't happen every day!

Karinshak: One of the unique aspects of our technicians being in and out of customers' homes and on the streets where all of us drive is that sometimes their customer service efforts extend beyond our products and services—to just being a good Samaritan. There are a number of stories where our technicians have helped customers with minor tasks while in their homes, and in one case I know of, one of our technicians helped save the life of a person trapped in a vehicle during an accident.