

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Start Me Up: SportsTech Program Brings Ideas To Next Level

The second class of the **Comcast NBCUniversal SportsTech Accelerator** took the big stage Thursday, taking part in the Demo Day that serves as the culmination of a three-month program. The participants secured 21 commercial deals, partnerships and pilot, but this is just the beginning of those startups' journeys.

This year's class included 10 companies pitching everything from new ways to book custom travel and ticket packages (**BookSeats.com**) to widgets that can reward word of mouth marketing (**Ice Cream Social**). It began with an application. This year, Comcast NBCU received more than 800 entries from 44 countries that its due diligence team studied to see if they align with the company's eight strategic investment areas: media and entertainment, fan and player engagement, athlete performance, team and coach success, venue and event innovation, fantasy sports and betting, esports, and the business of sports.

Before being chosen as the program participants, each startup had to undergo a review and scoring period in front of the SportsTech advisors and pitch their businesses and answer questions on how they're handling potential obstacles.

"While it could be amazing for those startups to have access to those business leaders, we [wanted to make a] program that was much more powerful for these startups to have an opportunity to build, test and iterate their products across a

wider range of sports organizations and teams," Jenna Kurath, VP, Startup Partnerships and Head of Comcast NBCUniversal SportsTech said to **CFX**. "So we strategically thought about what builds off of our media rights and sponsorship investments."

Over a three-month period, the startups worked on areas such as branding, marketing, fundraising and financial planning. Advisors include the **PGA Tour, WWE, NBC Sports, Sky Sports, Golf Channel, NASCAR, Comcast Spectator** and three U.S. Olympic organizations, utilizing the breadth of Comcast NBCU's portfolio.

Some of the startups have already found a presence on Comcast NBCU's media properties. **HeadVantage**, a company focused on visually capturing highlight-worthy moments in sports and offering the biometric and performance data behind the play, has been able to place live content on the **GolfPass** network and offer deeper insights into the teachings of golf instructor *Martin Hall*. Other opportunities could be in the works soon with Sky Sports and the PGA Tour.

Other startups, like **LetzChat**, offer somewhat broader opportunities. The company's technology translates customer interactions in real-time into the language of the viewer, opening the door for live and VOD subtitling and new opportunities within mobile apps, chat support and on websites.

"[LetzChat's] technology is simplified," Kurath said. "It has a great cost structure, so you really only pay for your consumers that want to translate, for example, a website to their native



## Nominate for The Diversity List.

Help Cablefax recognize the top multi-ethnic executives based on their influence and power within the industry plus this year, Cablefax introduces its inaugural Pride List, honoring top LGBTQ+ execs who are making their mark on the industry.

Other nomination categories include D&I Mentor of the Year, Public Affairs Campaign and Thrivers Under 30, the industry's rising stars under 30.

**Deadline:** Friday, June 3 to submit three entries for free.

[www.CablefaxDiversity.com](http://www.CablefaxDiversity.com)

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language based off of their device.”

Comcast NBCU's investment doesn't stop at the conclusion of Demo Day. The company holds an equity position in each partner, so it has some skin in their success. Kurath added several partners are on the cusp of going from a proof of concept to a pilot, opening another door for continued collaboration.

“That three-month curriculum is really about helping them grow a revenue-sustainable business.,” Kurath said. “Whether that's helping to refine their storytelling, business model, financial model if they need to raise existing or additional funding for their company ... That's just the beginning. We like to think of it as a long-term investment in these companies.”

#### PIVOTAL UPS ROKU, HAS MARKET CONCERNS

**Pivotal** raised its rating on **Roku** from “Sell” to “Hold” Friday now that the company's shares have reached its \$80 year-end target price. The firm said it no longer views Roku stock as an attractive short opportunity, and has concerns about the disappointing outlooks laid out by company's like Snap. “Our view is that the sudden drop in results at SNAP harkens back to the late '90s when ad-based internet companies massively benefited from large digital ad spend by profitless internet companies that disappeared quickly when investors suddenly pushed those companies to generate a profit (driving material declines in ad spend),” Pivotal said in a note. “In addition, a recession arguably could speed up the swap away from traditional pay TV to streaming.” The firm does believe that TV spend will be better insulated relative to other segments. Pivotal also stated that it still believes that Roku is absolutely in an attractive position for investors, but it is

more threatened than it ever has been by larger companies like **Comcast** and **Charter** looking to dive into the streaming aggregation marketplace.

#### LIONSGATE PREPARES FOR STARZ SPINOFF

**Lionsgate** brought in revenues of \$929.9 million for 4Q22, and much of that was due to growth in the company's studio business and television production segments. “In spite of a very competitive and disruptive environment, we've just completed one of our best content-building years ever,” CEO *Jon Feltheimer* said during the company's earnings call Thursday. For FY22, Lionsgate produced 21 feature films, had 14 new shows picked up to become network series and went 15 for 15 in renewals of current series. Revenues in the Media Networks segment dropped 5.2% to \$380.2 million due to a decline in domestic linear revenue that was partially offset by growth in domestic streaming revenue and with STARZPLAY international growth. Global streaming subscribers grew 47% YOY to 24.5 million. Feltheimer is more than optimistic that Lionsgate will be able to spin off **Starz**, estimating that news of a transaction will come by the end of the summer.

#### FCC'S FINAL COUNTDOWN ON ECF

The **FCC** received requests totaling more than \$2.8 billion in the third and final application filing window of the Emergency Connectivity Fund. Applications asked for funding for 5.1 million connected devices and nearly 4.3 million broadband connections. As with previous rounds, applications will be prioritized to fund schools and libraries with the greatest need as well as those that are located in rural areas. An



## CONGRATULATIONS to the 2022 Cablefax 100!

These exceptional leaders have grown their organizations through a pandemic, rising inflation, M&A, an influx of streaming services and general uncertainty without ever dropping the ball. Our annual must-read magazine highlighting the industry's most powerful executives is bigger, splashier and mightier than ever.

Visit [www.Cablefax100.com](http://www.Cablefax100.com) to enjoy the digital version, get the download on each of our honorees as well as their answers to the famous Cablefax 100 Q&A.

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estimated \$1.5 billion remains in the program, which the FCC expects to be able to use to fund requests from a significant portion of the 7,369 schools and school districts, 628 libraries and 133 consortia that applied.

**DOING GOOD**

**Comcast** garnered local media [attention](#) in Nashville this week for its flag replacement program, an initiative where its technicians keep an eye out for American flags in states of disrepair. Whether the household or business is a Comcast customer or not, technicians are trained to notify a flag replacement team that will contact the flag owner and offer them a free replacement. The program was started in 2017 by a Comcast maintenance supervisor in Delaware.

**PROGRAMMING**

**Fox Sports** is readying to cover the first window of the UEFA Nations League 2022-2023 competition season. Starting on Wednesday, Fox Sports will air 44 matches across **FS1, FS2, Fox Sports Plus, Tubi** and the Fox Sports App. Highlights include 2020-2021 runner-up Spain opening play on the second day of competition against Portugal on Thursday at 2:30pm ET on FS1. Sixty matches will be streamed exclusively on the **Fubo Sports Network**. Select other UEFA matches will also be available on the streamer throughout the competition through Fubo Sports Network's distribution partners. – Another season of "Gold Rush: Parker's Trail" comes to **Discovery** on June 17 at 8pm. The show will also be available to stream on **discovery+**.

**PEOPLE**

Former **Atlantic Broadband** (now **Breezeline**) and **Metrocast** exec **Danny Jobe** has joined **Roanoke Connect** and **Roanoke Electric Cooperative** as Director of Broadband Field Operations.

**EDITOR'S NOTE**

**Cablefax Daily** will not publish Monday in observance of Memorial Day. Let us take a moment to remember the U.S. service members who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

**CABLEFAX DASHBOARD**

**Twitter Hits**

**Drew Clark** @drewclark  
 .@POTUS is a supporter of using #broadband to end the #digitaldivide. Great honor to talk with @DavidsonNTIA about how @NTIAGov will implement the #Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

**Breakfast Media** @BreakfastCensus · May 24  
 @DavidsonNTIA and @drewclark interview at #mountainconnect, drilling into the details of the #IIJA #BEAD #NOFO. Watch the video at 1:16 on the replay below, at discuss.broadband.money/c/broadband-gr... Story to come!



**Katina Arnold** @KatinaESPN  
 Celebrated amazing women @ #TheGracies & ESPN's Alexandra Nolen for "Making History," a brilliant feature recognizing barrier-breaking women in sports like Sarah Thomas, the first woman to officiate a Super Bowl who accepted with us. Thanks to ESPN icon @lindacohn for presenting!



**TDS Telecom** @tdstelecom  
 Congratulations to TDS Telecom State Government Affairs Manager Jean Pauk for being inducted into the WSTA Hall of Fame. During her 34-year career at TDS, Jean has made a lasting impact on our company and the entire industry.



**Research**

(Source: [CNBC](#) and [Momentive's Workforce Happiness Index](#))

- > 69% of workers say morale is "excellent" or "good" at their companies, up 5% from November.
- > 66% of workers say their company's position on political issues is "about right," indicating that most people tend to work for companies that share their values.
- > 59% of workers would support an increase of unionization at their company. 76% of Democrats, 44% of Republicans and 64% of independents support that increase.
- > 65% of workers are now working fully in-person from their office or workplace.

**Up Ahead**

**JUNE 12:** Cablefax's Fiber Panels for Cable Operators, [Fiber Connect Pre-Conference](#); Nashville

**JUNE 27-30:** CTA's [CEO Summit](#), Santa Barbara

**JUNE 29:** [Cablefax's FAXIES Virtual](#)

**JULY 24-27:** [NCTC and ACA Connects' Independent Show](#); Orlando

**Quotable**

*"We are engaged in a robust and productive process with our bankers and a number of potential strategic and financial partners. We're targeting an announcement of our plan by the end of the summer and expect a transaction could close as early as our fiscal fourth quarter... obviously anything can change. We're in an incredibly disruptive environment right now. But based upon the conversations we're having right now, we think that's the appropriate time frame."*

– **Lionsgate CEO Jon Feltheimer** talking on the company's Q422 earnings call the possibility of a sale or separation of Starz by the end of the year