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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Roll Call: Expo General Session Hits Labor Concerns, Network Pressures

Cable CEOs agree—the single largest difficulty every operator is dealing with right now is the acquisition and retention of talent that can build and maintain the networks of the future.

“Every operator is dealing with not only a significant upgrade to the network that’s all mapped out, a multi-year plan that has been anticipated to improve multiple aspects of connectivity, but there’s also things like new passings,” **Comcast Cable** President/CEO **Dave Watson** said during the opening general session of **SCTE’s** Cable-Tec Expo in Philadelphia on Tuesday. “I think there’s a bit of crunch in terms of the sheer amount of people you need to pull this off.” He also believes operators are in a time of transition where they need to train employees up to be able to effectively manage virtualized networks and maintain the multitudes of software elements that are now key parts of any modern network.

Nearly half of **Liberty Global’s** revenue today comes from its mobile operations. That’s made its business more complex, and also forced it to address challenges with recruitment across its mobile and cable units. “When it comes to the core things that we do every day, whether it’s upgrading or building 5G, these kinds of things we can find and we think there’s not a talent gap,” Liberty Global CEO **Mike Fries** said. “We need more data experts. We’re finding it hard to find people who can help us get into new revenue streams, new opportunities.”

While topics like the future of the metaverse are par for the

course at Expo, not all of the applications that will place extra pressure on the networks are straight out of “Star Trek.” During a panel of technology leaders later in the general session, **Cox** EVP/CTO **Len Barlik** commented that the operator noticed a spike in traffic and demand last week that coincided with **Amazon’s** first “Thursday Night Football” showing. Operators are having to work trends like the shift of sports from linear environments to digital broadcasts into their business plans, those tied to their network’s long-term strength and their video strategies.

“In the U.K., for example, Amazon Prime has been carrying the Premier League for a few years. We have to actually invest specifically for those use cases,” Liberty Global EVP/CTO **Enrique Rodriguez** said.

The world made the transition to virtual meetings and presentations so smoothly over the last two years that some continue to question the demand and need for in-person events. But the overflowing ballroom and arrivals of international delegations from the likes of Bolivia and Japan seemed to prove that folks from the industry globally are clamoring for opportunities to share ideas and problem solve at venues like Expo.

“Those of us who went abroad were kind of like astronauts. We were floating around the planet, but we were always tethered to the U.S. One of the things we never missed [attending] was the Cable Show,” Fries said. “That was a special moment because this is a special industry, and to get people together that sensed that energy, that history and needed to do the really practical, important work, it’s very cool. I’m glad this is

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Regulation: FCC's New Rules on Net Neutrality
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the new iteration of it.”

By the start of this year's conference, SCTE had already exceeded the attendance for its 2019 show in New Orleans, the last Expo the organization was able to hold in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It may celebrate another victory before this year's show closes with **CableLabs** CEO *Phil McKinney* remarking that the team is “within spitting distance” of setting a new attendance record.

SCTE and CableLabs are already getting excited for next year's Cable-Tec Expo, to be held Oct. 16-19, 2023, in Denver, Colorado. **Charter Communications** Chair/CEO *Tom Rutledge* and **Rogers Communications** CEO *Tony Staffieri* will serve as co-chairs of the event, continuing the trend from this year's conference of having one international representative as well as one from the U.S. “International is critical to our partnership and just what a great addition to the extension of thinking and problem solving,” SCTE President/CEO *Mark Dzuban* said.

SCTE EXPO NOTEBOOK

While WiFi Sensing is being used today for home security, that's just the surface of its possibilities. **CableLabs** has identified more than 50 use cases for the technology, which is the ability to infer motion in an area covered by WLAN. During a technical session at **SCTE** Cable-Tec Expo, CableLabs' *Josh Redmore* walked attendees through some WiFi Sensing possibilities for aging in place, such as fall detection or boundary alerts. Redmore said the technology could be pushed even further to provide a sleep study in the home that would likely be more accurate since there wouldn't be the influence of a foreign environment. Other possibilities include better integration with IoT (think pointing at a light switch to turn it off instead of verbally commanding Alexa) and much more responsive VR than would allow for everything to be housed in a much lighter headset. As wonderful as all of it sounds, there's one big asterisk as WiFi Sensing moves forward: privacy/security concerns. “What we are collecting is nothing short of the most personal, private data you could possibly imagine. It will know who you are, where you are in the house, when you go to the bathroom, how healthy you are,” Redmore said. “Security must be the very first conversation you have.” – **Comcast** is moving closer to the successful launch of commercial 10G, announcing the successful test of the final technical component needed to deliver multi-gigabit symmetrical speeds through its entire network. The test involved Comcast inserting new 10G amps, built on a reference design developed by Broadcom, into a complete 10G network loop using a previously-tested DOCSIS 4.0 modem and network technologies. With this milestone achieved, the provider is pushing forward to launch live trials later this year with multi-gig symmetrical services arriving fully before the end of 2023.

CABLE TV PIONEERS 2022

It was a packed house at the Union League of Philadelphia on Monday night for the 56th annual **Cable TV Pioneers** banquet, with some attendees placed in overflow rooms to watch the evening's festivities from video monitors. The Class of 2022 featured 21 members, with each recognized through short videos about their more than 20 years in cable. The evening kicked off with video remarks from Pennsylvania Governor *Tom Wolf*, who said the state is “proud to be hosting the headquarters of 42 cable companies, including **Comcast**... Pennsylvania is also home to **Cablefax's** Regional Association of the Year, the **Broadband Communications Association of Pennsylvania**.” Comcast CEO *Brian Roberts*, a Class of 2016 Cable TV Pioneer, also gave video remarks congratulating the honorees, with a special shout-out to the four Comcast execs being inducted—*Bill Connors*, *Joseph Guariglia*, *Charlie Herrin* and *Allison Olien*. Among this year's honorees is **Charter** Vice Chairman *John Bickham*, who is set to retire at year-end. He received a standing ovation from several in the crowd and fellow inductee *Nomi Bergman* of **Advance Newhouse** devoted part of her remarks to thank Bickham for teaching her the “power of the question.” “I have come to practice it,” said Bergman. “It is an extraordinary tool. John, thank you for being a teacher to all of us, and for your remarkable tenure and leadership.” The Pioneers consist of many from the operator and vendor space, but this year's class featured five from the programming side, including **TV One** and **CLEO TV** President *Michelle Rice*. “Growing up a little brown girl in New Jersey, I never imagined I would be a Cable TV Pioneer. I'm so excited that I had the opportunity in my career to provide beautiful images of Black people on television and hopefully that will inspire other people to take the same path,” she said. Relive the night by catching a replay of the banquet on the Cable TV Pioneers' [YouTube channel](#).

CABLELABS GOES BACK TO NEAR FUTURE

CableLabs surprised the **SCTE** Cable-Tec Expo audience Tuesday with the fifth entry in its “The Near Future” video series. “Enjoy the Ride” is the latest entry in the film series that aims to inspire innovators by previewing the technologies and experiences that could soon be supported by broadband networks, and this edition focused on showing the direct impact future technologies could have on the lives of families. The video is available for viewing on the CableLabs [YouTube channel](#).

AT THE COMMISSION

The **FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau** has added equipment and services from two additional companies to its list of those that are a threat to national security. On the recommendation of **NTIA**, the **Department of Justice** and the **Department of Defense**, **China Unicom**, **Pacific Network Corp.** and its wholly-owned subsidiary **ComNet** have

joined a group that includes **Huawei, ZTE, Hytera Communications Corp., Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company, Dahua Technology Company, Kaspersky Lab, China Mobile** and **China Telecom**.

GRABOFF TO LEAVE WBD

Longtime media veteran and President, Global Business & Legal Affairs and Content Supply Chain at **Warner Bros. Discovery** *Marc Graboff* is stepping away from his position at the end of the year. Graboff, who joined **Discovery** in 2015 and made stops at **NBC** and **CBS** before that, will work with Chairman and Chief Content Officer, U.S. Networks Group *Kathleen Finch* on the transition. “My decision to leave was not easy and I have been grappling with it for months,” Graboff said in a memo obtained by **CFX**. “But, with my contract up next spring and the ongoing transformation of our newly merged company, the timing made sense.” Graboff isn’t retiring. He leaves behind a list of significant content and talent deals, including helping to orchestrate signing on figures like *Guy Fieri* and *Bobby Flay*.

NBCU PAIR OF INITIATIVES

NBCUniversal, State Farm and Walton Isaacson are teaming up to spotlight various small businesses. The “Open Doors: Where Small Businesses Thrive” program works with diverse, small businesses and gives them marketing and advertising resources to help the companies improve growth. The [program](#) will be available across NBCU’s One Platform and provides an anthem spot and bi-lingual visual marketing playbook, as well as a small business spotlight to be presented in both English and Spanish. The first spotlight will follow the family-owned Venezuelan restaurant *Cachapas y Mas* in New York City. NBCU is also rolling out the Creative Impact Lab, an initiative dedicated to nonprofit storytelling and giving young people from diverse backgrounds tools to fine-tune production skills. The company has partnered with nonprofit organizations across the U.S. to find candidates from underserved communities. Each organization will receive a grant to produce PSAs and short marketing videos for select NBCU and **Comcast** partners.

NIFTY FIFTY

HBO is launching the “Fifty Years of Firsts” campaign ahead of its 50th anniversary on Nov. 8. Over the 50 days leading up to that date, HBO will share glimpses of trailers, casts, unreleased footage and more from some of the network’s upcoming originals, beginning with a clip from an episode of “House of the Dragon” to premiere Sunday. Starting Oct. 31, famed classics like “Sex and the City,” “The Sopranos” and “Curb Your Enthusiasm” will play from 8pm-11pm on Monday-Friday on **HBO2**. The event culminates on Nov. 8 with the “HBOwards,” an award show that’ll highlight HBO’s best from the past half-century.

PLUME MAKES IT 35

Plume revealed that 35 WiFi Consumer Premises Equipment (CPE) devices are now certified and supported by **OpenSync**, the open-source software that enables support of smart home devices. OpenSync’s software allows its CPEs to exist on the same network regardless of the creator or WiFi generation. So far, more than

275 CSPs leverage OpenSync to serve over 41 million locations.

RITTER GETS TENNESSEE GRANT

The Tennessee Emergency Broadband Fund—American Rescue Plan awarded **Ritter Communications** a \$3.8 million grant to bring fiber internet services to communities in western Shelby County. Additionally, Ritter will use the funds to upgrade residential services in Northaven, Locke, Cuba, Shelby Forest and West Union. This will add to the provider’s \$14 million network upgrade in 40 communities across west Tennessee and northeast Arkansas, which is set to complete this month.

RATINGS

Make it three weeks that **ESPN** stood atop cable networks in prime P2+. The sports network averaged 2.33 million viewers, slightly down from the 2.68 million viewers the week prior. **Fox News** followed closely at 2.21 million, with **MSNBC** and **HGTV** behind with 1.26 million and 893,000, respectively. **USA Network** rounded the top five with 823,000. – Fox News was boosted by its coverage of *Queen Elizabeth II’s* funeral Monday, which averaged 1.71 million viewers P2+ from 3am to 3am. That put it ahead of MSNBC’s 922,000 and **CNN’s** 852,000. – **Disney** networks saw a 22% viewership increase YOY for the 2022 **WNBA** season, helping it be the most-viewed season since 2006. The 23 postseason games averaged 456,000 viewers—also up 22% YOY—with the semifinals averaging 488,000 viewers.

PEOPLE

Warner Bros. Discovery finalized its DEI leadership team, which will be led by Chief DEI Officer *Asif Sadiq*. *Karen Horne* is the SVP for North America, with *Rukasana Bhajjee* as VP in Europe, Middle East and Africa and *Niarchos Pabalis* as Director for Latin America. An executive for Asia-Pacific will be announced soon. The team will work with workforce programs and content initiatives to maintain a central strategy within the company. Those programs will be managed by *Christian Hug*, VP, Workforce; *Grace Moss*, VP, Pipeline Programs and *Yvette Urbina*, VP, Content/Productions.

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