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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Change Ahead: Michelle Ray to Leave Kaitz Foundation

As the industry gathers in New York next week for **Diversity Week**, there will be a chance to evaluate DEI progress, celebrate success and shake the hand of the woman who has helped guide the **Walter Kaitz Foundation** for more than 15 years before she steps away from her role as Executive Director.

Michelle Ray will leave her post at the advocacy organization for advancing equity, inclusion and belonging in media and entertainment on Dec. 2 to spend some time with family and evaluate her next chapter. After years of working for **NCTA** in the Industry Affairs department, she transitioned to Kaitz in 2006 as Senior Program Director. She came in when the organization was in between executive directors and helped pull off its annual fundraising dinner by—as then-NCTA CEO Kyle McSarrow described it—“jumping into the breach.”

Getting things done behind the scenes is sort of her specialty. News of her pending departure forced Ray into the spotlight Wednesday. “I’ve always sort of been in the background. I think that’s sort of where I feel like my superpower has been—making sure that the trains leave on time and that the organization has always been positioned to continue to do the work because unfortunately, some of us forget the devil is in the details,” Ray told **CFX**.

After a series of promotions, she was named Executive Director of Kaitz in 2018. Her tenure has included launching the annual Hollywood Creative Forum, an intermediary for di-

verse creatives seeking access to decisionmakers. She’s also guided the Foundation through the pandemic, which prevented it from holding its largest fundraising event for the past two years. **NATPE’s** Chapter 11 filing this week was a sobering reminder of the toll COVID has taken on entities that rely on events. The Kaitz dinner routinely brings in north of \$1 million to support the industry’s diversity associations—the **Emma L. Bowen Foundation**, **NAMIC**, the **T. Howard Foundation** and **The WICT Network**.

Ray credits the Kaitz board with keeping the Foundation, which since 2004 has distributed more than \$23 million in grants in support of diverse initiatives, on solid footing. “They don’t want to take their foot off the gas of DEI, so they’re committed to the point where they’re willing to continue to fund us and help us do this work,” she said. “I think if not for this board and for the industry at large who believes that there’s a place and a space for the Foundation, it could easily happen, the same with NATPE and others... We’re a nonprofit, so we rely heavily on our board to support us and the work in terms of dues and in terms of fundraising efforts. And we’ve sort of even gone outside of the board, largely across the industry, whether it’s tech and other companies, to come in and support us.”

On Wednesday, the industry will once again come together for the Kaitz dinner, a capstone to a week that includes The WICT Network Leadership Conference and Annual NAMIC Conference. The event at the NY Marriott Marquis will welcome

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the first-ever ChangeMaker awards, as the organization shifts from its legacy Diversity Advocate and Diversity Champion Awards that were very focused on the industry. Past honorees have included **Comcast NBCU**, **HBO**, **TV One** and **CLEO TV** President *Michelle Rice* and **Girls Who Code** founder/CEO *Reshma Saujani*.

“What we tried to do with these ChangeMaker awards is to honor the work around DEI that still tangentially touches our industry. We just thought it’s a different way to approach who we talk about and honor. That’s what we brought to this year’s event to sort of reinvigorate us about different companies and people that we can shed a spotlight on,” said Ray.

One of the honorees is **Human-I-T**, a company focused on sustainability and helping minorities and groups largely left behind in terms of tech. The other ChangeMaker recipient is Vice Media Group Chief People Officer *Daisy Auger-Domínguez*. “She is really focused on cultural shifts within the workplace. Her book, ‘Inclusion Revolution: The Essential Guide to Dismantling Racial Inequity in the Workplace,’ is just phenomenal and she has a great TED talk around this work as well,” said Ray.

A search for Ray’s successor is underway, but don’t look for her to leave a lengthy to-do list for the next director. “I don’t want to be too prescriptive with respect to the next frontier because whoever comes behind me now has this opportunity to build something that’s not even within our thinking right now. Something different, unique and exciting,” she said.

FRONTIER DROPS NBA TV, NBC SPORTS CHICAGO

Frontier entered October with fewer sports channels on its programming lineup. The provider said it made the decision not to renew its contract with **NBA TV** and **NBA League Pass**, which expired Sept. 30. “These decisions are informed by customer viewership, programming costs, and programming availability on numerous platforms. Our customers still have access to NBA TV content at nba.com and it is also available through our partnerships with **YouTube TV**, **DirecTV Stream**, **fuboTV**, and **Sling TV**,” the company said. It also has stopped carrying **NBC Sports Chicago**. “Sports programming represents a significant portion of our overall programming costs and networks often demand to be included in our most popular TV packages,” the provider told customers. It’s dropped several RSNs in recent years, including **NESN**, **NBC Sports Boston** and **MSG**.

JUDGMENT MADE AGAINST MY INDIAN TV

IBCAP announced Wednesday that a federal court in New York issued a \$26.55 million judgment against the operators of the pirate service **My Indian TV** and websites *MyIndian.tv* and *NewMyIndian.tv*. The case was originally filed by **DISH** against *Sanjeev Kumar* and *Tsvetomir Dobrilov*, and the monetary fine accounts for infringement of 177 of DISH copyrighted television programs—

The WHO and the WHY

CFX’s spotlight on recent new hires & promotions



**RAJAN
Singh**
HEAD OF GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION
EARTHX MEDIA

3 THINGS TO KNOW

- Rajan joins Earthx Media after being the founder and CEO of Digi Media Global, where he collaborated with networks to expand distribution and increase revenue into new territories. In his new role, he’ll oversee the expansion and availability of EarthxTV on digital and linear platforms across the globe.
- Before Digi Media Global, Rajan was EVP of International Business at Star Network (News Corp.) in India, primarily helping set up a consolidated international business for its channel distribution outside of India. He also was EVP of International Business at Sony Entertainment Television and led its global business for India-focused channels.
- He’s built up a hefty amount of frequent flyer miles over the course of his career. Aside from multiple roles in India, he was CEO of ZEE TV in the U.K. and Africa, and has also developed international events at major venues in London, New York, Paris and Johannesburg. His new gig has him working from Dallas, Texas, as well as London.

good for \$150,000 per registered work. On top of the fine, the court issued a broad injunction barring Kumar and Dobrilov from streaming certain IBCAP member channels or selling the My Indian TV service, which shut down as a result of the lawsuit and exited the U.S. market around April. The injunction also states domain name registries and registrars must transfer certain names used by Kumar and Dobrilov to market and operate the service as well.

MILLENNIUM INFRASTRUCTURE FUND RAISES BAR

In order to help with construction loans and capital matches for internet providers to receive grants, the **Millennium Infrastructure Fund** is increasing its cap from \$30 million to \$75 million. The fund was created in 2004 with the goal of providing financial guidance and loans, rental equipment and material management to local and regional providers. It works with **Widely**, a technology consulting firm that focuses on telecommunications, to assist network owners to apply for grant funding as well. After pledging \$30 million to 15 providers to help connect 90,000 homes, the new funding cap will allow businesses to reach 300,000 additional houses.

AT THE FCC

The **FCC** is committing \$96 million in new funding through

the Emergency Connectivity Pro-gram to support broadband service and connected devices to students across the country, especially those living in states impacted by Hurricanes Fiona and Ian. Nearly \$53 million will benefit students, teachers, and library patrons living in areas impacted by recent hurricanes. For example, the Puerto Rico Department of Education is receiving support for 225,000 mobile hotspots and Pinellas County Schools near Clearwater, Florida, is receiving support for nearly 15,000 laptops. – The **FCC** will begin taking applications for its Fall 2023 Attorney Honors Program on Thursday. Graduating law students and current judicial clerks are eligible to apply for the Commission's program, which has participants partake in a two-year employment and training program designed for introducing entry-level attorneys to communications law and policy. The application window will last until Nov. 14 at 11:59pm ET, with earlier corresponding deadlines for other U.S. time zones.

COMCAST OPENS SHOP IN OREGON

Comcast opened an Xfinity store in Beaverton, Oregon, and will celebrate the occasion with a grand opening ceremony Friday. The ribbon cutting will kick the event off at 2pm, and festivities will run until 4pm. Food and drinks will be provided and giveaways will happen throughout the event. Store employees will also be giving demos of the X1 platform, xFi tools and more.

ACCELECOM EYES SOUTHEAST

The Louisville-based wholesale and business fiber provider **Accelecom** completed the purchase of **Georgia Public Web**. The acquisition allows Accelecom to bring fiber-optic services to enterprise and carrier customers across the southeast region. Georgia Public Web—now Accelecom Georgia—will still provide middle-mile and broadband services.

GREEN LIGHT FOR CEQUEL TO ACQUIRE BRTC

Shareholders for the **Benton Ridge Telephone Company** gave a thumbs up for the company and its subsidiaries to be acquired by the investment and management firm **Cequel III** for an undisclosed amount. The acquisition of the west-central Ohio ILEC is pending regulatory approvals, but is expected to close in 4Q22 barring any roadblocks. Cequel—led by **Charter** co-founder *Jerry Kent*—previously managed **Suddenlink** before its sale to **Altice USA** in 2015.

FIBER FRENZY

AT&T launched its fiber network in Vanderburgh County, Indiana, on Wednesday. CEO *John Stankey* was on site alongside County Commissioner Cheryl Musgrave as the two revealed the first locations to get service. The county contributed \$9.9 million to the project, while AT&T put forth \$29.7 million. Officials also recently agreed to extend the network to 90 additional locations, bringing symmetrical speeds of up to 5 Gbps to more unincorporated areas of the county. The project is slated to be completed by Nov. 2023.

NATIONAL BULLYING PREVENTION MONTH

Breezeline teamed up with the National Bullying Prevention Center to distribute cyberbullying prevention resources to over 2,200

educators. The materials include tip sheets created for parents to help with conversations regarding cyberbullying and what to do if their child is being targeted, as well as advice for students on online safety and how to speak with an adult about the subject.

DIRECTV STREAM LAYS UP DEALS

As the **NBA** regular season looms on the horizon, customers who sign up for **DirectTV Stream's** Choice + packages will get \$10 off for each of the first five months. The Choice package comes in at \$89.99/month before the discount, with the Ultimate tier at \$104.99/month and the Premier tier at \$149.99/month. More information can be found [here](#). DirecTV is also giving satellite, Stream and commercial customers a free preview of NBA League Pass from Oct. 18-24.

RATINGS

Monday Night's Los Angeles Rams vs San Francisco 49ers game saw an audience of 12.6 million viewers across **ESPN**, **ESPN2** and the Spanish-language broadcast on **ESPN Deportes**. The "Monday Night Football with Peyton and Eli" telecast featuring *Peyton* and *Eli Manning* had its biggest audience of the season so far with 1.63 million viewers, good for the fourth-highest since the telecast's inception in 2021.

PROGRAMMING

"The Surreal Life," a social experiment show in which eight celebrities live together, premieres with back-to-back episodes Oct. 24 starting at 9pm on **VH1**. Celebrities include *Dennis Rodman*, *Frankie Muniz* and *Kim Coles*. – Commentator and host *Bomani Jones* signed a contract extension with **ESPN**. Jones will host his podcast "The Right Time" three episodes per week and continue to make regular appearances on various ESPN radio and television programs. – **MotorTrend TV** and the streaming service **MotorTrend+** will have coverage of "Mecum Auctions Chicago" on Oct. 14-15 from noon-6pm. – This year's MLB Wild Card games will be televised across **ABC**, **ESPN** and **ESPN2**. Coverage begins with four games on Friday, starting at noon with the Tampa Bay Rays vs Cleveland Guardians on flagship ESPN. Philadelphia vs St. Louis follows at 2pm on ABC before Toronto vs Seattle begins at 4pm on ESPN. The New York Mets will host the San Diego Padres on ESPN to wrap the night, with first pitch set for 8pm. – This week, **DirectTV** is starting the Fantasy Zone channel broadcasts for NFL Sunday Ticket Max subscribers at 12:40pm ET, allowing fantasy football players an extra 20 minutes to make last-second adjustments.

PEOPLE

Chicken Soup for the Soul Entertainment named *Phil Oppenheim* to the newly created role of Chief Content Officer. Effective Nov. 1 and reporting to President *Jonathan Katz*, he'll oversee all areas of content strategy across the company's physical and streaming brands such as **Crackle** and **Redbox**. Oppenheim was previously SVP of Program Scheduling at **Epix**. – *Toni Murphy* was selected as **Comcast's** new SVP of Sales & Marketing at the company's Central Division HQ in Atlanta. The former SVP of the Keystone Region will now oversee the Central Division's sales and marketing operations.

Think about that for a minute...

A New Game

Commentary by [Steve Effros](#)

In the last several columns I've tried to lay out the business landscape of video delivery leading up to today. Several things become obvious: first, there's an intimate relationship between content and delivery regarding business plans, but they are essentially different businesses. Second, content is too expensive to secure to support its own combination of creation and delivery. There has to be some other sort of revenue generator.

Newspapers had advertising and particularly classified ads, television had compensation from local stations and then retransmission consent from cable. Cable had subscription revenue and then added broadband delivery to the already-created infrastructure. And now "streaming" has moved from pure subscription to increasingly adding advertising tiers to try to cover all the costs. It's not clear whether that will work.

Why? Because creation costs have skyrocketed. The ease of getting into the business when you don't really pay for delivery has created a plethora of new "competitors." The EU is looking, finally, at making the streaming services pay the broadband infrastructure folks for the stress they put on the capital expenditures of that infrastructure, but it hasn't happened yet, and in the U.S. we aren't close to a political consensus on that issue. So it's still very easy to join the fray, but with all the competition, the price of content has gotten out of control, with the biggest companies, like Netflix and Amazon paying billions for exclusive content to try to corner the market.

How does all this change the game? Well, as noted, some of those very big new players, the ones outbidding everyone for the unique content like football games, have a major difference from what went on before; they don't have to seek new customers. They are their own customer! The value they get from the data derived from providing a streaming service to unsuspecting subscribers, who willingly provide that intimate data while tuning in, is worth a whole lot in addition to the subscription revenue they are getting. That data is then used by them to enhance their targeted ad sales and lots of other things we don't really know about! So the new business plan

still includes multiple revenue streams, but some of them are internal to the company doing the streaming. And, as noted last week, these are no small companies! Amazon's annual revenue is double the combined total of WB-Discovery, Disney and Comcast combined! With a revenue stream like that, or Apple's \$2.2 Trillion market value, a business plan that anticipates competing with them for the new, exclusive, "walled garden" content had better be unique.

I haven't heard anyone suggest how this competition can work in the long run with the new game being introduced by these behemoths.

As usual, however, there are wrinkles to consider. The biggest one just appeared the other day when the Supreme Court started its new term and announced it was taking a case looking at the broad immunity provided to the Googles of the world by Section 230 of the Communications Act. If that immunity gets limited or eliminated, if, as has already happened in a lower court, the State Legislators get a chance to write editorial rules for social media, then a significant part of the business plan of those companies is in jeopardy. That changes the equation again.

For now, however, the cycle identified of video creation and delivery relying on multiple revenue streams is being replicated, once again, in the "streaming video" realm. Subscription plus advertising plus a bit of freeloading (television spectrum was given away for free, and "streamers" put the most stress on the delivery network but don't pay for it) has worked. Will it work for long? I don't think so. Will we let the "big" stay that big? That's the next question.



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(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)

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