

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Keep Climbing: New Era Means Chance for Change

Overcoming adversity helps mold business leaders into the styles and personas by which they guide their companies, but in a post-pandemic world, one of the things that saw the biggest change was, and continues to be, the workplace.

The theme for **The WICT Network** 2022 Leadership Conference is the “Great Reset” as many in the cable and TV industries look for solutions and innovations that help foster a modern and inclusive work setting. But there are plenty of opportunities for executives to leave long-lasting impacts, notably within streaming ventures. The new, more directly consumer-facing delivery of content lets companies dictate the message they want to send to their audience. But those like **AMC Networks** CEO *Christina Spade* are grappling with the tough equation of balancing advancement with maintaining the traditional linear business.

“We’re at this place that we’ve been riding the wave of amazing results in the linear world that we’ve seen for over the past decades. Strong margin businesses that now with our streaming businesses and digital businesses taking hold, we’ve had to really rethink and reshape our future in a way that we’re trying to also optimize the traditional businesses,” Spade said at a panel of C-suite executives at the Leadership Conference.

Spade has only been in her role for just over a month, but she’s been “a sponge” and maintains that her current responsibilities are to listen more rather than act. She mentioned the importance of making sure such changes—whether it be with content, workplace culture or DEI—are substantial and not superficial. Helping guide the path at AMC Networks are initiatives such as “Can We Talk About This?,” which encourages discussion of difficult topics that Spade says offer a more peripheral view on what AMCN’s audience wants.

When it comes to today’s business world, **Cox Communications** EVP & Chief Strategy Officer *Sujata Gosalia* said

it’s not just the effects of what current innovations do that people should look at, but also what the opportunities that will eventually come may look like.

“We think we’re at the dawn of a new internet, actually one that you don’t necessarily go to just with your mobile phone or your PC or your television, but one that is actually going to surround you. It’s going to make physical things more digital, as you think about all of the things in your community being connected now,” Gosalia said. Her role of a strategist means thinking 10-20 years down the line is just her style, but it’s critical to finding more ways on how to provide.

There’s still plenty of technological and people-based innovation to be made, despite the shakeups that the world undergoes, said **NBCUniversal** Chairman, Entertainment Networks *Frances Berwick*. It’s the grit that helps leaders reach the finish line looking to keep going. Those will be the pioneers to guide the industry to new heights, whether it be on the content or business side, she said.

“I think one of the great things is there is still great content we are getting,” Berwick said. “I think as an industry, we’re much better at marketing to our viewers. And it’s about finding ways to be scrappy and different. The people who succeed will be the ones who can really be flexible and adapt.”

### DIVERSITY WEEK RETURNS

**Diversity Week** is back in person, kicking off Monday with **The WICT Network’s** Leadership Conference. And while the New York Marriott Marquis was buzzing with activity, the organization also is offering up conference live streams and on demand playback. The model is something borne out of the pandemic, but here to stay. “That it is the here the now and the forever. There were so many tragedies with the global pandemic, but there were also a lot of silver linings. Not everybody has the ability to get on an airplane and book a hotel and see this content. We want everybody to have access to this content, even

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### DIVERSITY LIST HONOREES

JESSICA FANG, Fox Corporation  
AUDREY STEELE, FOX Ad Sales  
TERRI HINES, FOX Sports

### PRIDE LIST HONOREES

STEPHEN BROWN, FOX TV Stations  
TAYLOR SIBBERN, Tubi

FOX

FOX NEWS  
media

FOX  
Sports

FOX  
COLLECTIONS

FOX  
TV STATIONS

tubi

when they don't necessarily have the budget to go travel to it," WICT Network President/CEO *Maria Brennan* told **CFX**. "Having said that, we love the camaraderie and that B2B network that is The WICT Network, so we don't want to ever see that facet go away either." With the hybrid model, WICT did see live registrations down a little bit from 2019, but still quite strong at around 700 as of last week. Approximately 200 had signed up for on demand. "When it all comes together, there will be at least as many eyes on the Leadership Conference as ever before. And with a little luck, maybe we'll have even more than ever before," Brennan said. This was the first Leadership Conference since the organization rebranded under the moniker The WICT Network, with the aim to be more inclusive of all women in media, entertainment and technology. Brennan said the change should bring a diversification to the audience, particularly with more women in tech in attendance. Another difference is the sessions themselves. "The content is about the business of the business, less about the women's empowerment side of it," said Brennan. "We're going to really hit the DEI in the town hall meeting that we hold with **NAMIC** and we have the undercurrent throughout our event. But our business has been completely [upended] by the pandemic, and we need to talk about what it means as an organization, as an industry, as individual companies and certainly as women who were marginally more effected than men because of She-session and results of data coming out of the Great Resignation." WICT and NAMIC will release their employee surveys during a Tuesday town hall, giving more insight on hiring, promotions, pay equity and more for industry employees during the pandemic.

**JUST RELEASED: CABLEFAX DIVERSITY ISSUE**

**Cablefax: The Magazine's Diversity issue** made its debut during Diversity Week. In addition to our annual must-read Diversity List honoring the influential multi-ethnic executive in the industry, we debut our first-ever Pride List recognizing outstanding LGBTQ+ leaders. **FCC** Commissioner *Geoffrey Starks* was honored as the D&I Public Interest Champion for his inclusive efforts to close the digital divide as well as helping to launch the Early Career Diversity Initiative at the agency. "I have seen how getting the right internship can be the first domino in a tremendous career," he tells us. The magazine also features several industry D&I Champions as well as our Mentor of the Year honoree, a slate of five outstanding Thrivers Under 30 and our Organization Awards for companies that are advancing diversity and inclusion within their walls and beyond. Visit [CablefaxDiversity.com](http://CablefaxDiversity.com) to view the digital issue and read individual profiles. We look forward to raising a glass to celebrate all of the 2022 honorees during **NAMIC's reception** Tuesday evening.

**Cablefax Executive Round Up**

**We asked honorees on [Cablefax: The Magazine's Diversity List](#) to share their advice for productive conversations about race in the workplace.**



**Roy Cho**  
SVP, Distribution & Development  
**AMC Networks**

"Foster an environment where ERGs are not the only forum where race is considered, debated and discussed but rather show employees that the underlying principles of DEI are organically woven into driving business forward (hiring, promotion, creative decisions, business practices, etc.)."



**Johnita Due**  
EVP, Integrity & Inclusion, CNN Worldwide  
**Chief DEI Officer, CNN, Turner Sports + Bleacher Report and WarnerMedia Studios**

"Do not wait until there is a crisis. Create a culture where employees' voices are not only heard but empowered. Emphasize the importance of calling people in and not calling people out. Understand that everyone won't see things in the same way because of different lived experiences and that is OK as long as we are committed to listening to each other and learning from each other."



**Latasha Gillespie**  
Executive Head of Global DEI & Accessibility  
**Amazon Studios**

"In order to have a productive conversation about race in the workplace you have to do the following: 1) Engage white people. Historically these conversations have been among people of color with other people of color, but to have a productive conversation you need all races actively engaged. 2) Remember that in order to reach truth and reconciliation, we must first deal with truth. Historical context is important and it shifts the conversation from representation to equity. 3) Make sure people are properly trained to lead and manage conversations about race. Having a certain skin color or lived experience is not a proxy for facilitation, empathy, and de-escalation skills."



**Dennis Mathew**  
CEO  
**Altice USA**

"In my experience—and this applies to many areas in life—we have to seek to listen and learn first; we can't assume we know and jump to conclusions. Listen first, be slow to speak. Don't assume we understand someone's journey because of what they share—or don't share—on social media, in the media or in movies. The only way we can truly understand is by listening. We should be having conversations with people from all backgrounds; and if we come to those conversations from a posture of listening and learning, we will ultimately have a better understanding of our teammates."

**NTIA AWARDS ALASKAN FIBER FUNDING**

**NTIA** is awarding Alaska's **Bethel Native Corporation** a \$42 million Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program grant for the construction of a fiber network that will serve communities in the Yukon Kuskokwin Delta. **GCI** signed on as a subgrantee partner, and will construct and operate the fiber network. GCI President/COO *Greg Chapados* revealed during a Monday announcement event held at the Alaskan Native Heritage Center in Anchorage that GCI also plans to upgrade its existing cable plant in Bethel and construct fiber-to-the-premises local access networks in four other communities. Upon completion, those networks will deliver up to 2 Gigs in broadband speeds to those communities. GCI plans to launch 2 gig service in Bethel by the close of 2024. **USDA's** Rural Utility Service also awarded GCI a \$31 million Reconnect grant for the construction of long-haul and local fiber in another five YK Delta communities. "This is not just about bringing the internet to the YK Delta. This is also about bringing you all, your communities, your local knowledge, your beautiful culture to the broader internet community," NTIA Administrator *Alan Davidson* said during the event. "For that, I think we are all going to be very grateful."

**WICT CONFERENCE NOTEBOOK**

**MSNBC** anchor and business correspondent *Ali Velshi* joined **WICT Network** President/CEO Maria Brennan Monday for a fireside chat at the WICT Network Leadership Conference that delved into the significant changes the journalist has seen since beginning his career in the 1990s, including the number of mentorship programs that have been established to help companies hire from underrepresented communities. Velshi said women have shaped his career by providing a viewpoint he otherwise would fail to see. "As a result of having women on my staff, including all of my executive producers since the day I started at MSNBC, issues get brought to the fore that you think you know exist but you don't understand the importance of," he said. "When your boss is a mother of small children, when your boss—in my case—is an expert on abortion rights, you just understand things with a granularity that as a man, you don't." – A panel on initiatives to amplify underrepresented voices noted a very real issue that remains around DEI is burnout. It's well known that TV and films often fall short on proper representation, but those advocating on a daily basis sometimes hit a wall. Staying positive and avoiding that pitfall means simplifying arduous tasks to overcome mental roadblocks, while also knowing DEI has been a centuries-long issue and not a recent phenomenon. "I do think we need to remember that we've been working on this for decades, this is not actually a new thing... Each of us in our own businesses have our own initiatives and programs and such. I feel like we are stronger together," said *Jo DiSante*, VP, Current Programming & Synergy, **ABC Entertainment**.

**NSR STILL HIGH ON SUDDENLINK SALE**

It's been a moment since we've heard any murmurs about buyers for **Altice USA's** Suddenlink system, but **New Street Research** still believes a sale is likely. In a note sent Monday, the firm said it doesn't believe Altice would have to sell Suddenlink at an exceedingly high multiple to make the deal worthwhile for management

with a sale at anything above 10x being accretive to the company. "A transaction at 10x would generate \$10BN in proceeds for Altice after tax, which is enough for management to tender for minorities at a 100% premium, while keeping leverage at a manageable level," NSR said. "In five years, Altice will have completed the fiber upgrade, FWB will have run its course, and the business should have returned to sustainable growth. If management gets the same 10x for optimum then, they will be selling at \$68/share."

**ZONE TV SCORES MILLIONS IN FINANCING ROUND**

AVOD service **Zone tv** and its owner **ES3** have closed on \$22.5 million in new capital to grow the company's interactive and FAST initiatives. The round included equity from new partner **Block Communications** (owner of **Buckeye Broadband**) as well as a debt refinancing with The Toronto-Dominion Bank, and Zone tv believes this move will lead to a better capital structure for the company and lower cost of capital.

**WICT TOUCHSTONES LUNCH**

**FCC** Chairwoman **Jessica Rosenworcel** keynoted the WICT Touchstones Luncheon, discussing the importance of remembering what matters to those whose voice isn't heard. "When you do break glass ceilings or get a seat at the table, look to see who is left behind. Find a way to be a sponsor, be a mentor, be someone who brings someone else along. In other words: pull up a chair for others," she said. That mantra of cultivating a workplace dedicated to equality for all is why *Cox Communications* EVP/COO *Colleen Langner* (Operator) and **Hallmark Media** President/CEO *Wonya Lucas* (Programmer) were selected as this year's Women of the Year. Both credited their families and support systems at work for their careers' successes, but they fit the mold of what it means to "bring your own folding chair" to the table and demand a seat as a leader. **CommScope** VP, Global Key Account Marketing *Urvi Shah*, **Charter** Regional VP, Field Operations—West Division *Shannon Atkinson* and **Warner Bros. Discovery** SVP, Business & Legal Affairs *Lisa Williams-Fauntroy* were recognized as this year's Women to Watch.

**TUBI SURPASSES 200**

**Tubi's** FAST offering now features more than 200 channels, the streamer announced Monday. Over the last month, it has added local **Scripps** news stations as well as programming from **Lionsgate**, **FilmRise** and **Cinedigm** to its channel lineup.

**IOWA'S LIBERTY BUYS NEIGHBORING NATEL**

Iowa's **Liberty Communications** has agreed to purchase the assets of **Natel Broadband**. The transaction will see the combination of the providers' fiber broadband, fixed wireless and voice services for residential and commercial customers.

**NAT GEO GETS FIELD READY ONCE AGAIN**

**Nat Geo** is kicking off the third year of its Field Ready Program. The initiative aims to promote diversity and inclusion in unscripted TV production around the world, placing underrepresented creators behind the camera in natural history, science and exploration filmmaking. Thus far, participants from 15 countries have completed the program and 60% of them have worked on global Nat Geo productions.