

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Survey Says: Industry's Power Players Weigh in on AI, Top Priorities

It seems like every news cycle brings another doom-and-gloom headline about ChatGPT run amok and the overall dangers of AI, but industry leaders spotlighted in the just-released [Cablefax 100](#) expressed optimism about the technology's future.

"Almost every day I read about the downsides of AI/machine learning yet remain optimistic for our most likely near-term use case. We have vast amounts of data that make sense to mine and learn from in order to reduce customer friction points and improve reliability without customer intercession," said honoree and **Cable One** CEO *Julie Laulis*. "We are on a quest to move from reactive to proactive to predictive to autonomous in many areas of our business and AI/ML will be a part of that journey."

Some companies are already in the AI trenches. "AI is already helping **WOW!** serve our customers better by giving the right information from many sources to our representatives so they can offer specific, timely advice. I think AI will continue to improve as it aids our employees in making better, more timely decisions," said fellow honoree and **WOW!** CEO *Teresa Elder*.

That's not to mean it doesn't raise concerns, particularly within the creative community. One of the issues in the current **Writers Guild of America** strike is the union's attempt to regulate the use of material produced using AI or similar technologies. "Technologists, on average, do not truly respect forms of human creativity other than their own. If they did, they would not be trying to supplant writers and artists with code," said **FX Content and FX Productions** Chairman *John Landgraf*. "I know there is a lot of money to be made and power to be gained, but here is what true respect means: I wouldn't do it for all the money and power in the world."

Still others believe there's a way for AI to actually open the door to more creativity. "It will automate a number of redundant

tasks, freeing up people to work on more interesting and creative projects. It will come about more slowly than the current hype would have you believe and it will not create massive unemployment," predicted **GCI** CEO *Ron Duncan*. Along those lines, CableLabs CEO *Phil McKinney* sees the tech as serving as a personal aid in creativity and even health/wellness. "[Think] AI for designing your next presentation and creating a new recipe. AI for personalized healthcare with a shift to more remote care such as self-service healthcare options, smart virtual nurse bots, online health coaches and more," the 100 honoree said.

The Cablefax 100 also weighed in the industry's top priority for 2023, with the Content Leaders often having a different focus than Operations Leaders. Programmers such as *Kathleen Finch*, Chairman & Chief Content Officer for **Warner Brothers Discovery's** U.S. Networks Group, cited the various content delivery offerings out there. "Balancing our content output to keep the pipelines full and the quality high, without overwhelming fans with too many choices. We need audiences to find and watch what we make, but sometimes navigating through the clutter is challenging," she said.

On the Operations side, many talked about the need for a well-trained workforce as well as network upgrades and expansions, particularly given the amount of government funding tied to broadband deployment. "The unprecedented amount of funding that will be distributed is an incredible opportunity for cable to demonstrate that we are a critical industry in America's economy and future. At the same time, we need to continue executing on deployment of 10G technology to demonstrate that our industry is delivering on the promise of 'the next great leap for broadband,'" said **NCTA** President/CEO *Michael Powell*.

Of course, it wouldn't be the Cablefax 100 Q&A without tossing a few less serious questions into the mix. When we pitted tennis against pickleball, tennis just barely came out

We congratulate our Cablefax 100 honorees for their contributions and leadership.



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on top—55% vs 45%. More of our 100 is rooting for the NY Yankees than any other sports team, with the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles taking second place. We also got a ton of great answers when we asked what TV series intro they won't fast forward through. Shows receiving multiple mentions included "Game of Thrones," "Law & Order," "Cheers" and "Succession." "Nicholas Britell's score and the vintage family home videos are completely mesmerizing," YouTube's *Christian Oestlien* said of the latter. Read the entire Cablefax 100 issue, including full Q&As, at Cablefax100.com.

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NBCU UPFRONT GOES ON SANS YACCARINO

NBCUniversal's upfront was something of a coming out party for the company's new ad division leaders, namely interim Advertising and Partnerships Chair *Mark Marshall*. He and NBCU Television and Streaming Chair *Mark Lazarus* didn't shy away from mentioning *Linda Yaccarino's* sudden departure to **Twitter**, and their comments were largely focused on complimenting Yaccarino on her role in shaping the advertising innovation culture that is alive and well at NBCU. "It is an absolute honor and really a little humbling to be out on this stage, representing this company and all the content that you've seen today. This is my 10th year at NBCU and I've been privileged to work with some of the best executives anywhere including Linda Yaccarino and the incredible team of leaders we have across the company," Marshall said. "I've heard from so many of you over the past 72 hours and I can't tell you how much that means to me." He touted the power of NBCU's viewership to the ad community, telling advertisers they can reach nearly 160 million people in one month across **NBC** and **Peacock** with only 10% duplication. "This is what every media mix model has looked for forever, that ability to find massive reach with low duplication. And unlike some of our other video competitors, it's actually in content you want to be part of," Marshall said. "There is no other media com-

pany that's invested in the ad ecosystem of tomorrow like we have." Of course, the presentation showcased a number of series announcements between performances from the likes of *Reba McEntire* and *Nick Jonas*. "Based on a True Story," a drama following an unlikely trio looking to capitalize on the true crime craze in America, premieres with all eight episodes on Peacock on June 8. "The Real Housewives of New York" will kick off Season 14 on **Bravo** on July 16 with an all-new group of women, and Season 5 of "The Real Housewives Ultimate Girls Trip" has been greenlit for Peacock with fan favorites from the franchise including *Dorinda Medley* and *Luann de Lesseps* set to take part. The ongoing writers strike will be felt at every upfront event to be held this week, and Lazarus' brief comments hinted that he doesn't expect it to be wrapped up soon. "We are grateful for the contribution writers make to our company and respect their right to demonstrate. It may take some time, but I know we will eventually get through this, and the result will be a stronger foundation on which we can all move forward together," Lazarus said.

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BREEZELINE WINS BIG IN VA GRANT PROGRAM

Virginia Governor *Glenn Youngkin* awarded more than \$59.5 million in grants last week through the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative. The funding will be directed to 14 projects serving 20 localities across the state, and the goal of the program is to extend service to areas that are currently underserved by any broadband providers. This application year, the state received 35 applications requesting more than \$300 million in funding. **Breezeline** walked away as the biggest winner, being awarded approximately \$8.75 million to build a broadband network to 2,766 unserved locations in Essex County and another \$6.446 million to build a FTTH network to another 2,979 unserved locations in Caroline County. Others awarded were **Shentel**, taking home more than \$4.9 million to build out to 2,447 locations in Shenandoah County and \$1.37 million for 565 locations in



CONGRATULATIONS to all the honorees!

The 2023 Cablefax 100 Magazine is FINALLY here.

Browse, share, and get to know this year's top executives list in our annual 100 digital issue.

www.cablefax100.com

Submit your Diversity List 2023 nomination by Friday, May 19! Visit www.CablefaxDiversity.com.

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Bedford County, and **Verizon**, receiving \$2.957 million to build a FTTH network to 1,347 locations in Greenville County.

LINEAR DECLINE TO ACCELERATE, S&P GLOBAL PREDICTS

Linear television is still alive, but early indicators would point to a modest increase in the trend of decline in 2023. That's according to **S&P Global's** latest report, which estimates that overall pay TV subscriber launches will come in above 2022's 7% drop. Legacy pay TV subscriber declines, including cable, telco and satellite, are likely to reach 12.4% while growth in the vMVPD segment is likely to grow to 10.4%. Among the factors benefiting the virtual providers is the move of NFL Sunday Ticket from **DirecTV** to **YouTube TV**.

MUSK TO APPEAR ON CNBC

Elon Musk will talk with **CNBC's David Faber** during a special presentation tomorrow at 6pm. It'll be Musk's first TV appearance since announcing he was [relinquishing Twitter's CEO duties](#) to former **NBCU** Chairman of Global Advertising and Partnerships *Linda Yaccarino*. "I've long been inspired by your vision to create a brighter future. I'm excited to help bring this vision to Twitter and transform this business together," she recently [tweeted](#) in response to Musk's announcement. Yaccarino is slated to start within the next six weeks, while Musk will shift to Executive Chair and CTO.

WOW! HALTS TV+ PRODUCT

WOW! is making some changes to its dedicated live TV service. It's discontinuing the marketing and selling of its TV services—including the WOW! tv+ product that launched in mid-2020—and is now offering **YouTube TV** to customers starting this summer thanks to a deal with **Google**. Residential video customers will begin the migration process in the summer. The provider will continue to support its current video services as existing customers can switch to the vMVPD.

LRG: 960K 1Q23 BROADBAND ADDS

The top cable and wireline phone providers as well as fixed wireless services in the U.S. had approximately 960,000 net additional broadband subscribers in 1Q23, according to **Leichtman Research Group**. LRG ranked **Charter** as the provider with the most adds at 76,000. **Comcast**, which has the most total subs at 32.32 million, had 5,000 net adds for the quarter. Top cable companies added around 65,000 subscribers, down from 485,000 net adds in 1Q22. **Lumen** had the biggest loss at 56,000, followed by **AT&T** with a loss of 41,000. **Verizon**, however, saw 44,000 adds. Wireline phone companies lost about 20,000 total broadband subscribers.

GREAT AMERICAN MEDIA, PURE FLIX TO COMBINE

Great American Media and **Pure Flix**, a **Sony Pictures Television**-owned streaming service focused on faith and family, are merging. Great American Media will retain a majority interest in the combined company with Great American Media President/CEO *Bill Abbott* set to become CEO of the merged company, reporting to the board of directors. Pure Flix was acquired by Sony Pictures Television in December 2020 and touts approximately one million subscribers across the U.S. and Canada.

CARRIAGE

Chicken Soup for the Soul Entertainment and **AMC Networks** agreed to a deal that'll bring 12 FAST channels to **Redbox Free Live TV**. That includes **The Walking Dead Universe**, **AMC Thrillers**, **All Reality WE tv**, **MSG SportsZone**, **ALLBLK Gems** and others to bring Redbox's lineup to nearly 180 channels, with the platform expecting to breach 200 by early summer. Redbox's streaming app can be found on Roku, Samsung, Vizio and other devices.

DEALS

T-Mobile is giving new and existing customers a season-long **MLB.TV** subscription for free in addition to \$200 toward any other sports streaming app of their choice. Customers can get the MLB.TV deal from May 23-July 17 via T-Mobile Tuesdays. It joins **MLS Season Pass on Apple TV** and **ViX Premium** as the viewership deals part of T-Mobile Tuesdays.

PROGRAMMING

Next on Xfinity's "Free This Week" are four **Apple TV+** programs. Xfinity customers can watch the first seasons of "Prehistoric Planet," "Foundation," "Loot" and "Swagger" until Sunday. – "Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves," an action film based on the popular board game, will debut on **Paramount+** in the U.S. on Tuesday. The movie will become available in various international markets later this year. – Summer is near for the folks at **FX**. Season 5 of "What We Do in the Shadows" will premiere its first two episodes July 13 at 10pm, streaming the next day on **Hulu**. Then, the new limited series "Justified: City Primeval" will debut with two episodes July 18 at 10pm—also streaming the next day on Hulu. Aug. 2 will see the Season 3 start of "Reservation Dogs" exclusively on Hulu, and then the 14th and final season of "Archer" will round things out beginning Aug. 30 at 10pm on **FXX** and Hulu the following day.

PEOPLE

Parrot Analytics hired *Jaime Otero* as VP, Partnerships. He'll help the company speed up its rollout of entertainment analytics and content valuation solutions.