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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Plan B: New ChimeTV CEO Says Bell Hasn't Tolloed on Upstart Net

As *Takashi Cheng* steps into his role as the new CEO for fledgling Asian American Pacific Islander network **ChimeTV**, he's intent on making sure it doesn't meet the same fate as [Black News Channel](#) and other independent upstart networks. This year, **Cinemoi's** lone linear distributors—**DISH**, **Verizon** and **Frontier**—all quietly dropped the indie net focused on film, fashion and style after it stopped providing a video feed.

"I inherited some problems," Cheng acknowledged at the beginning of this interview. "When I landed, they were three months behind on payroll, three months behind on vendor payments, and they were going to go dark. But I quickly turned things around and now I would proudly say ChimeTV has a lot of staying power."

ChimeTV joins his **Society 1**, a privately funded members club founded by Southern California Asian American community members. What does that mean? "We're a group of like-minded Asian Americans who said, 'What would happen if we combined our resources and we invest.' Think of it as your superfund, your own consumer family office. Think of how we can kind of collectively own real estate, collectively invest in API media and build an entire ecosystem around that," Cheng said. He said Society 1 currently has 43 members, who he described as "millionaires and billionaires" with the shared common vision of empowering the Asian American community.

This isn't Society 1's first venture into Asian-centric programming, launching streaming platform **GoldenTV** earlier this year.

"There is a plan to combine GoldenTV and ChimeTV. ChimeTV will be the linear presence that eventually may even adopt the name of GoldenTV. GoldenTV will be the OTT, ChimeTV +, the digital side of it and it will still focus on a creator-centric platform that attracts and helps creators develop original API content," Cheng said.

Cheng replaces ChimeTV founder *Faith Bautista* as CEO. She has exited the company and is currently facing a [lawsuit](#) from HUD-approved counseling agency **National Asian American Coalition**, which claims she caused the organization to submit fraudulent counseling sessions for payment from the state of California and that she improperly secured a \$2.5 million loan for NAAC to take a 20% interest in Chime that has since been canceled. Bautista has denied all allegations made against her in the NAAC suit, with her attorney stating she has dedicated her career to advocating for the rights and needs of Asian Americans, Hispanics, African Americans as well as low and moderate-income individuals. **CFX** was unsuccessful in reaching Bautista for this story.

Cheng said he learned of ChimeTV as it was launching and thought the English-language network was an interesting proposition, but he felt that with Bautista coming from the nonprofit world, she didn't have a grasp of what was needed to succeed. One of his first items of business as the new CEO was to trim ChimeTV's staff. "She has a heart of gold and when she launched Chime, she wanted to employ everybody in the village," he said. "They didn't necessarily have all of the,

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I think, expertise and qualifications, but Faith wanted really to give the people in our community that have been there for her, I guess, a place to help build Chime. Through her lens, she was being a community builder, but I think what she doesn't understand is navigating the production side of entertainment, and then navigating the business and distribution side of entertainment, and then navigating a business itself, those are three different animals. When you're trying to merge all three together and do that on your own without people with the right skill set, that becomes problematic."

Cheng is adding some new leadership to ChimeTV, telling **CFX** that former California State Controller and former California gubernatorial candidate *John Chiang* has been appointed to head finance and government affairs. He also teased that there are some notable celebrities that can't be named yet who will be coming on board as advisors and supporters.

There's still a long road ahead. ChimeTV began broadcasting in January with **Charter** as its sole MVPD partner. More distribution is a must, with Cheng mentioning **Comcast** as a key target. The goal is to revamp Chime's programming lineup to give it more originals and other key events, including the Unforgettable Gala, which Society 1 is a financial backer of. The gala was created in 2002 by *James Ryu*, founder and publisher of *Character Media*, to celebrate diversity across the AAPI community and recognize the successes of the past year. "I don't think that we're going to fail. I'm not going to let this fail," said Cheng. "We have some very unique programs that are coming into place."

LICHT STEPPING DOWN AT CNN AMID CRITICISM

CNN Worldwide CEO/Chairman *Chris Licht* stepped down Wednesday after just over a year in the position. With him gone, CNN's interim leadership team will include EVP, Talent and Content Development *Amy Entelis*; EVP, Editorial *Virginia Moseley*; EVP, U.S. Programming *Eric Sherling* and newly appointed COO *David Leavy*. "The job of leading CNN was never going to be easy, especially at a time of huge disruption and transformation, and he has poured his heart and soul into it," **Warner Bros. Discovery** CEO *David Zaslav* said in a statement. "While we know we have work to do as we look to identify a new leader, we have absolute confidence in the team we have in place and will continue to fight for CNN and its world class journalism." Licht took over the network in May 2022, coming over from **CBS** where he served as EVP, Special Programming and EP/Showrunner for "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert." The start of his tenure was marred by the decision to cut **CNN+** weeks after its launch, and he has faced another round of criticism recently after hosting a town hall with former president

The WHO and the WHY

CFX's spotlight on recent new hires & promotions



ELYSSA Byck
SVP, ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIPS AND OPS
NBCUNIVERSAL AD SALES & PARTNERSHIPS

3 THINGS TO KNOW

- Elyssa's next step in her nearly 15-year career has her joining the NBCU family in a newly created role. She'll drive cross-functional alignment regarding strategy and vision for enterprise partnerships, corporate partners and key stakeholders across the Comcast NBCU umbrella. Elyssa will report to President/CBO Krishan Bhatia.
- She most recently ran the ship at Kindred, a venture-backed membership network made to support executives in the ESG and DEI space. Elyssa was VP, Global Strategy and Operations at BuzzFeed before co-founding Kindred in 2019. At BuzzFeed, she oversaw partnership relations between Twitter, Meta and others.
- Elyssa was named to Forbes' Next 1000 list in 2021 for her work at Kindred. The list highlights entrepreneurs operating businesses with under \$10 million in revenue or funding.

Donald Trump and the release of a devastating [profile](#) by *The Atlantic*. For some staff, the instability of the last year has risen to a new level as they prepare to move their longtime workplace. By the end of 2023, CNN's Atlanta staff will be leaving the downtown CNN Center back to the network's original Techwood campus. Other news networks are taking notice of the struggles at CNN, and **Newsmax** CEO *Chris Ruddy* took a swing at it after the announcement of Licht's departure. "We are not surprised CNN fired its CEO considering that Newsmax has consistently beaten CNN in key prime time hours while being neck-and-neck in key day parts," he said in a statement.

COMCAST, AMERICORPS SPREAD BROADBAND AWARENESS

The **Massachusetts Broadband Institute at MassTech** is teaming up with **Comcast** to kick off a new broadband adoption program in partnership with **Lead for America**. Through the American Connection Corps program, 15 individuals will be recruited for full-time, year-long fellowships that will see them serve as Massachusetts-based, boots-on-the-ground support at organizations focused on expanding broadband awareness and adoption. The participants will support the implementation of digital inclusion programs, digital skills training and build

awareness and enrollment in the **FCC's** Affordable Connectivity Program. Communities to benefit from the program include Boston, Chelsea and Holyoke. The experience will kick off in August.

GCI HOLDS RURAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT EVENT

As **GCI** continues connecting the Last Frontier, it welcomed nearly 35 technicians and representatives from 26 Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta communities for a week-long safety and technical training. It was GCI's largest training series held in rural Alaska, which helped technicians in areas like copper wire telecommunications network infrastructure and antenna structure lighting, as well as weather- and technology-related issues like hypothermia prevention and tablet and software training. GCI is planning to use the same model for the training program in other rural Alaskan regions in the future.

NIelsen GETS LOCAL WITH STREAMING

Nielsen introduced its Local Streaming Quarterly Solution, a new report that provides metrics on TV app usage and streaming to the glass for more than 20 major streaming apps at the local market level. It'll start with the top 56 local markets and include data on SVODs, AVODs and MVPDs and vMVPDs.

SPECTRUM REACH AT THE BEACH(FRONT)

Charter's ad sales arm Spectrum Reach is teaming up with the sell-side convergent TV ad server **Beachfront** to let Spectrum Reach deliver ads in a programmatic fashion across set-top box TV, CTV and online video platforms. The partnership will allow Spectrum Reach to sell linear and streaming TV inventory in a more automated, interoperable and private manner, while also enabling advertisers to buy premium, multi-screen inventory.

CTIA DEVELOPING CERTIFICATION FOR SMART CITY DEVICES

CTIA and **Ericsson** are collaborating on an IoT device certification program specifically designed for utilities. The Smart Connected infrastructure program is being developed specifically for power grids, water systems and smart meters to allow for further advancement of smart city technology. Manufacturers whose designs incorporate a pre-certified wireless module will be able to more quickly and cost-effectively certify their IoT devices.

RATINGS

The "June Weddings" programming event on **Hallmark Channel** kicked off with a bang this weekend. The network was No. 1 in entertainment cable in weekend total day among households

and in weekend primetime among households and W18+. The premiere of "Wedding Season," which reached 2 million unduplicated total viewers, was the most-watched entertainment cable program Saturday among households, W18+, P18+ and total viewers. Elsewhere on **Hallmark Movies & Mysteries**, "The Dancing Detective: A Deadly Tango" reeled in 1.3 million unduplicated viewers.

AT THE COMMISSION

The **FCC** is standing firm on its decision to fine *John Spiller*, *Jakob Mears* and their business names **Rising Eagle** and **JSquared Telecom** \$225 million for transmitting approximately one billion robocalls. Many of the calls were illegally spoofed and aimed at selling short-term, limited-duration health insurance plans. Spiller and Mears petitioned for reconsideration, but that was shut down by the agency. The Commission also ordered that **Avid Telecom** cease and desist its transmission of illegal robocalls connected to health insurance.

PROGRAMMING

Hearst Television's Media Production Group signed *Tiffany Haddish* to a development deal. She'll be an executive producer for two unscripted projects: the first being an original documentary on successful women who had long-term relationships with homeless men, and the second a feature project on psychotherapist and author *Elliott Connie*. – The **HBO** original doc "Taylor Mac's 24-Decade History of Popular Music" will premiere June 27 at 9pm on HBO, available to stream on **Max**. – **Starz's** travel docuseries "Men in Kilts: A Roadtrip with Sam and Graham" will have its Season 2 debut Aug. 11 at 9:30pm. It'll be available on the Starz app and its streaming and on-demand platforms the same day at midnight. – A new season of "Running Wild with Bear Grylls: The Challenge" will begin July 9 at 9pm on **National Geographic**. This season's guests include *Russell Brand*, *Bradley Cooper*, *Benedict Cumberbatch* and *Rita Ora*. – Season 2 of **Bravo's** "Below Deck Down Under" will get underway July 17 at 8pm. This season will have two new episodes air back-to-back each week starting July 24. All episodes will stream the next day on **Peacock**.

DOING GOOD

The **Comcast NBCUniversal Foundation** has given a two-year, \$1.3 million grant to **Easterseals**, a nonprofit services and advocacy organization for individuals with disabilities. The grant will be used to expand digital literacy training among young people with disabilities in employment programs. The funding will also support a national audit of digital literacy programs offered through Easterseals' affiliate network to identify opportunities to scale as well as a study to determine digital equity and access among BIPOC populations with disabilities. A digital equity summit will be held in early 2024 by Easterseals and Comcast NBCU to share findings and recommendations to address potential disparities.

Think about that for a minute...

AI to MI

Commentary by Steve Effros

Last week's column pointing to what I suspect will be the next trend in internet business plans was not intended to declare an "end point." It was just the beginning. The race is on to figure out new sources of revenue for major internet players. On the entertainment side the ad revenue combined with the subscription revenue is not likely to be enough due to the ever-increasing cost of original content, especially sports. So I suggested that transactional fees linked to betting is likely in the cards. As I said, you can probably bet on it.

But the entertainment, information, sports streaming conundrum of escalating prices forcing a search for new revenue is not the only endangered business-plan in the internet space. Consider search engines. Google raised the red flag at its headquarters when Microsoft supported OpenAI released ChatGPT just six months ago and more folks started experimenting with it faster than when Apple introduced the iPhone. Yes, Google had been dumping billions of dollars into AI research but was keeping it low key while they tried to make sure it wasn't overhyped too early.

The ChatGPT rollout killed that plan and the public race and the frantic reporting about AI took off. Microsoft pledged billions more for its efforts and both business awe and PR panic has ensued about AI. We'll get to that another time. What hasn't gotten as much notice is that AI, using LLM, "large language models," demands an extraordinary amount of computing time and power with new, very costly equipment. Suddenly the one company making the best chips, Nvidia, became a "trillion dollar valuation" company almost overnight. That, too, masked the underlying problem; the companies providing "AI" are losing massive amounts of money every day the public gloms onto this new toy. It's far more expensive to render an AI "answer" to an inquiry than it is to simply provide a Google list of search results!

We're in essence seeing the same syndrome starting to hit the AI tech providers that we're seeing with the entertainment/news/sports streaming folks. They're going to need

new revenue streams to be able to afford the real new costs of AI. What will it be? Well, my bet is we're going to quickly start to see the monetization of interactivity: "MI." In other words, if you want good AI results you're going to have to pay for them on a per-use basis. We're going to move in the direction of transactional payments for the use of almost all new high-powered aspects of internet applications..

This is already something that's being bandied about. The "best" version of ChatGPT is not publicly available. It's certainly not "free" like the first iteration was. The company that created it moved from being a non-profit organization to a profit making one several years ago when it became clear all this great new stuff was going to be really, really expensive. They are charging other companies wanting to use the "best" version of their LLM in order to refine a business model anticipating monetization of interactivity. You can bet on that, too.

And now comes Apple; it's not "augmented reality" or "virtual reality" they say, and certainly not the "metaverse"...that's another guy's moniker for it. Nope, Apple just introduced what they think the "next generation" of computing will be: "spatial computing!" But the new "Vision Pro" headset, which won't even arrive until next year, is set to cost around \$3500. As I said, this "new" stuff is very, very expensive!

Sure, the prices will go down as they figure out more efficient processing and manufacturing, but that will take a while. In the meantime, get ready for a basic shift in what we've been used to. Monetization of interactivity is coming.



Steve

T:202-630-2099
steve@effros.com

(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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