

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Taking the Reins: Starry Welcomes New CEO Amid Bankruptcy

Starry is making a change at the top with CEO *Chet Kanojia* transitioning to a role on the company's new board. COO *Alex Moulle-Berteaux* is stepping into the CEO seat, and he's preparing to take the business into a new era after Starry emerges from Chapter 11 bankruptcy later this summer.

Mouille-Berteaux's early background is in consumer marketing and he worked closely with *Steve Jobs* during his time at **Media Arts Lab/Chiat**, Apple's marketing agency, in the early 2000s. That sparked an interest in creating disruptive products and a passion for entrepreneurial companies, and he jumped into the world of video games when he joined *Rockstar Games* as Global Head of Marketing. He met Kanojia and became Chief Commercial Officer for **Aereo**, and they came together to dream up Starry, a company they viewed as being disruptive and filling a need for customers in need of broadband.

"What I'm focused on is driving the business, and in the current context where there isn't the same access to capital, it's all about profitability for us," he told **CFX**. "We're focused on utilization of the current network, driving penetration in the buildings we've deployed and getting ourselves on the fastest, lowest capital path to profitability."

That means Starry will be focused on growing its five core markets in Boston, New York City, Los Angeles, Denver and Washington, D.C. The new cost structure that has been ap-

proved by the bankruptcy court was designed to allow Starry to continue to maintain its subscriber base and the level of service those customers expect while also allowing for regrowth.

Once profitability is achieved, Mouille-Berteaux said the world really opens up in terms of what Starry can do. He believes there's a lot of innovation in front of the team in terms of how its services can delight customers and provide choice and different experiences from what incumbents are doing.

There will be less visibility into subscriber counts once the company emerges from bankruptcy as it is transitioning back into a private company, but he said there hasn't been much growth since it last reported numbers as Starry's priorities have been on emerging from bankruptcy stronger than ever. It last gave subscriber numbers in 3Q22, reporting 91,297 customer relationships and revenue of \$8 million.

Starry has been perhaps most well known in the digital equity space for its work with Starry Connect. The program focuses on providing no-cost and ultra-low-cost broadband service to public and affordable housing residents without requiring credit checks, long-term contracts, equipment deposits or a long application process.

The good news is the program will continue to exist and hopefully thrive after Starry emerges from Chapter 11. Mouille-Berteaux called it fundamental to the company's future and a key example of Starry's mission to serve the underserved part of the market. Starry Connect is available across more

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than 87,000 units of public and affordable housing in six states, and the company is continuing to get interest from different cities across the U.S. that want to deploy it in their communities. Mouille-Berteaux said there was a roadmap for that within the company's plans as well as potential partnerships with real estate companies.

For those that are looking to make their own difference when it comes to digital equity, he shared his words of wisdom after five years of growing Starry Connect.

"You have to have the passion to help, then you have to have the right economic approach, then you have to have the sort of technology and creativity to figure out how to do it. The outcomes are just so fantastic, employees take such pride in being part of something like that," he said. "I would say it takes entrepreneurship to get things like this done, and I just don't think there's enough of that in the internet service provider industry. We're happy to play that role."

MSNBC BEATS FOX NEWS BY A HAIR

It was a squeaker, but **MSNBC** had a slight edge over **Fox News** in last week's primetime ratings race, averaging 1.521 million total viewers vs Fox News 1.505 million, according to **Nielsen** data. It was a busy news week with President **Trump** indicted on 37 counts in the classified documents case. Sports still had a spot among the week's Top 5 cable nets, with **ESPN** taking the third place with 1 million viewers followed by **TNT** (923,000) and **INSP** (795,000). Fox News won the total day race (1.09 million) with MSNBC averaging 932,000. **CNN** was a distant third-place with 491,000 total viewers in the 6am-6am daypart. Fox News' "The Five" was once again the top cable news program across all categories for the seventh straight week with 2.6 million viewers and 271,000 with A25-54.

INDEPENDENT STREAMERS FORM ALLIANCE

Independent streamers came together Monday to form the **Independent Streaming Alliance**, an industry forum for proactive engagement and collaboration. ISA's founding members include **Allen Media Group**, **Chicken Soup for the Soul Entertainment**, **Cineverse**, **Future Today**, **kweliTV**, **Revry**, **Scripps**, **Tastemade**, **TMB** and **Vevo**. ISA will also highlight minority-owned businesses and advocate for more diverse programming and an equitable playing field across the streaming landscape. At its start, the alliance will have three working groups focused on measurement, distribution and demand.

NCTA SUPPORTS RISK-BASED FRAMEWORK FOR AI POLICY

NTIA asked for comments on AI accountability measures and policies and, boy, did it get them. More than 1,000 comments were filed by Monday's deadline, with **NTIA** planning to use the feedback to help draft and issue a report on AI accountability policy development. At this point and time, we can't say for certain if ChatGPT wrote any of them! **NCTA's** comments pushed for a risk-based framework when it comes to artificial intelligence policy, citing the AI risk management framework produced by the **National Institute of Standards and Technology**. "Risk management does not seek to eliminate all potential risks or prevent all possible harms. It is instead focused on identifying and prioritizing risks so that they can be addressed in a way that is context specific and proportionate with potential corresponding harms to consumers," **NCTA** said. The cable association also used its comments to reiterate its support of a national privacy framework, saying such a mechanism would also address privacy-related harms from AI. Many **NCTA** members are already using AI for things like network maintenance, virtual customer service and, for content creators, visual effects. The cable industry also believes AI could offer improved consumer accessibility, with **NCTA** members researching and investing in automatic speech recognition which, when coupled with appropriate quality controls, has the potential to drastically reduce captioning errors and improve caption synchronicity and completeness. The **NTIA** request is one of several government proceedings aimed at responsible AI. The **White House Office of Science and Technology Policy** issued a request for insights to develop a national strategy to mitigate the risks and leverage the benefits of AI. Responses are due July 7.

COMCAST GOES 10G

Comcast recently increased the speed on its symmetrical FTTH service, Gigabit Pro, to 10Gbps symmetrical in all the markets it serves. And before the end of the year, Comcast expects to be the first to deploy DOCSIS 4.0. The news was delivered in a [blog post](#) by Comcast Cable Chief Network Officer *Elad Nafshi*. He wrote that in the coming weeks, the operator will introduce a new WiFi device that includes a battery and cellular backup to help to ensure connectivity doesn't go down even in the event of a network or power outage. Later this year, Comcast plans to implement the latest **CableLabs** low latency DOCSIS specification.

FRIEDMAN CAPITAL UNVEILS BROADBAND FUND

Friedman Capital is getting into the broadband game, launching a strategic fund targeting fiber and internet service providers in underserved markets. The fund will be used to invest in geographically contiguous areas across the Sunbelt and the southeast U.S., and it is targeting \$250 million in capital commitments and a third quarter close. Friedman Capital has retained **Telecom Partners Group** to provide due diligence and network asset valuation analysis for transactions.

MADHIVE SCORES GOLDMAN SACHS SUPPORT

Goldman Sachs Asset Management has invested \$300 million in CTV advertising software platform **Madhive**, whose clients include **Fox**, **Scripps** and **TEGNA**. The investment will allow Madhive to further accelerate the growth and adoption of its CTV platform, most notably within the local advertising market, as well as expand new channels such as national/direct-to-consumer advertisers and retail media networks. **Latham & Watkins** is serving as legal counsel to Madhive. **Weil, Gotshal & Manges** is serving as legal counsel to Goldman Sachs.

HURRICANE PREP AT THE FCC

With the Atlantic hurricane season upon us, the **FCC** is co-hosting a two-day stakeholder workshop this week to improve coordination between the communications and energy sectors during disaster response and restoration. It kicks off Wednesday in Caguas, Puerto Rico, in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Energy, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and the Puerto Rico Governor's Office. The FCC has been on a mission to improve communications reliability and resiliency during hurricanes, wildfire and other disasters. Last fall, it launched a program to share industry communications outage information with first responders and other public safety personnel in state, federal, territorial, and Tribal nation agencies. It also adopted rules to improve wireless network resiliency during disasters and to make Emergency Alert System messages on television clearer and easier to understand.

RATINGS

Tennis Channel's French Open coverage for Friday's men's semifinal match between *Novak Djokovic* and *Carlos Alcaraz* drew 530,000 viewers—second only to the channel's all-time high, 666,000 viewers, during a quarterfinal match between Djokovic and Rafael Nadal during last year's tournament. – **Great American Family** ended May up 238% YOY

in total day household ratings, marking seven consecutive months as the fastest-growing network YOY in the daypart and demo. – **ID's** “The Curious Case of Natalia Grace” has passed a new milestone, reaching more than 10 million total viewers across ID, **Max** and **discovery+**. The viewership figures are based on **Nielsen** and first-party data. That's an update from the show's May 29 premiere. ID notched 6.3 million total viewers across its three nights of premiere episodes.

NETFLIX AND EAT

Netflix doesn't just want folks to binge on content—it wants them to binge on food. The streamer is opening a limited-time pop-up restaurant on June 30 in L.A. Netflix Bites will spotlight acclaimed chefs from Netflix series such as *Curtis Stone* (“Iron Chef: Quest for an Iron Legend”), *Dominique Crenn* (“Chef's Table,” “Iron Chef: Quest for an Iron Legend”), *Rodney Scott* (“Chef's Table: BBQ”), *Ming Tsai* (“Iron Chef: Quest for an Iron Legend”), *Ann Kim* (“Chef's Table: Pizza”), *Nadiya Hussain* (“Nadiya Bakes”), *Jacques Torres* (“Nailed It!”) and *Andrew Zimmern* (“Iron Chef: Quest for an Iron Legend”). Mixologists from Netflix's “Drink Masters” will handle the cocktail menu.

PROGRAMMING

The Weather Channel will debut “Search Party with Brandon Jordan” Sunday at 9pm ET. The one-air series sees the YouTuber traveling across the country to search for items lost underwater and return them to their owners. – **Nickelodeon** renewed “Baby Shark's Big Show!” for a third season. – **MTV** launches a new season of “Caught in the Act: Unfaithful” on July 11 at 9pm. – **VH1's** “Basketball Wives” is still going strong, with the network renewing it for Season 11. – **Premios Juventud** (The Youth Awards) turn 20 this year, with **Univision** set to air the awards telecast live on July 20. Actress *Alejandra Espinoza* returns as host, with *Bad Bunny*, *Becky G* and *Shakira* among the nominees. – **Disney Branded Television** greenlit a new animated preschool series inspired by “The Little Mermaid.” “Disney Junior's Ariel” is set to debut Disney platforms worldwide next year. DBT President *Ayo Davis* made the announcement during the Anney International Animation Film Festival. She also revealed new original animated series “StuGo,” which features six overambitious middle schoolers who are tricked into attending a fake academic summer camp by a mad scientist, and renewals for “Marvel's Spidey and his Amazing Friends,” “Firebuds,” “The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder” and “Kiff.” – **Roku** acquired the U.S. rights to “First Time Female Director,” a comedy film created by *Chelsea Peretti* (“Brooklyn Nine-Nine,” “Sing 2,” “Parks and Recreation,” “Big Mouth”) for its Roku Originals content lineup.