

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Cable-Tec Expo: Industry Heavyweights All Talking Convergence

Convergence was the word of the day for Tuesday's opening general session at **SCTE's** Cable-Tec Expo with industry execs touting a world of seamless connectivity that only cable can provide.

Canadian operator **Rogers**, with its wireless and cable business, is a bit further along in the convergence process, helped even more by its recent acquisition of Shaw. At first, the benefits included primarily bundling cable and wireless with a bit of a discount. "Of late, it's become more and more about leveraging distribution channels, but what we're really seeing now are consumers and businesses looking... for a seamless solution," said Rogers President/CEO **Tony Staffieri**. "I don't know if I'm on WiFi, if I'm inside, outside, I just need to be connected all the time.' ... The second piece that's becoming more and more important is reliability. To the extent that we could switch over from one network to the other seamlessly is quickly becoming the differentiator. Consumers are willing to trust one provider if they have something meaningful in terms of backup from one to the other."

With that in mind, Rogers is exploring satellite as its next area for backup. Staffieri said the company has partnerships with **SpaceX** and **Lynk Global** that it's working through for that "third line of defense."

In the U.S., billions in government funding for broadband construction will create new competitors. That's where convergence can help distinguish cable operators, **Charter** CEO **Chris Winfrey** said. "Because we have a converged network and because our competitors are only able to redline—they're not upgrading everywhere, they're kind of cherry picking—so cable when we upgrade, we do a ubiquitous upgrade everywhere, which means we can market and service an entire footprint," he said. "Our competitors can't do that. Our competitors can't do convergence the way we can. Even **AT&T**, their upgraded footprint might be 20% of the country [upgraded wireline]... and they sell mobile everywhere,

they can't do a converged product because what are you selling to the other 80%?"

Driving home the importance of convergence was a presentation from Charter Product and Technology President **Rich DiGeronimo** in which he touted how the cable industry today provides the fastest internet compared to the telcos and fixed wireless access. He highlighted how many operators have 1 Gbps downstream today, with gigabit symmetrical speeds rolling out. The industry's alignment on Distributed Access Architecture will enable 5 Gbps and 10G with DOCSIS 4.0. Fiber attachments to nodes can bring up to 25 Gbps, while coherent optics can move the needle to 100 Gbps on the optical network.

The industry is in the process of deploying WiFi 7, which is important as the wired network gets to 10G to pair that connection to a similar wireless offering. Of course, everyone always asks what people are going to do with all that speed? TBD, though DiGeronimo did throw out **Apple** Vision Pro, Apple's mixed reality headset launching next year, as one example. "This experience has more pixels than a 4K TV for each of your eyes. That's the bandwidth that this type of device needs and our networks can handle it now," he said, adding that it's incumbent on the industry to work with partners and suppliers to determine these type of new use cases.

Another area that relies more on the seamless connection convergence offers is simplifying the smart home experience. "There can be an array of IoT hubs and these hubs can cause consumer frustration and then decrease the adoption of these types of devices," he said, adding that the industry is making progress in this area by working with a number of wireless standards bodies, including the **WiFi Alliance** and **Connectivity Standards Alliance**.

Of course, no convergence chat is complete without talking

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about the inroads cable operators have made in the U.S. in mobile. **Spectrum Mobile** took home more postpaid phone additions than any of the competition in the first half of the year, despite only covering one-third of the country. “It’s not about us. It’s about us as an industry. What I’m really impressed by is as you look at the two MVNOs, Spectrum and [**Comcast’s**] Xfinity, the two of us brought more additions than the big three MNOs. We are transforming the mobile industry,” the Charter exec said.

One way Charter is leveraging convergence is with its “Mobile Speed Boost,” where Spectrum Mobile customers can get fast connections when connected to Spectrum Advance WiFi in the home or Spectrum WiFi access points. DiGeronimo gave the example of a 300 Mbps internet subscriber receive 1 Gbps speeds in the home through Speed Boost.

Tuesday’s Expo opener served somewhat as a rallying cry to get the industry on the same page. “We need to move together so that we have scale. What do we need to bet on? We need to bet on ourselves. We need to bet on the fact that we have the long terms asset that’s going to win and that we can have a lot of success in the marketplace,” Winfrey said.

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MALONE PROGNOSTICATES AT CABLE-TEC EXPO

John Malone called the “peace treaty between **Disney** and **Charter**” a win-win for both sides. “What it does, I believe, is it allows cable [to sell] a hybrid video service that is a mixture of streaming and linear which will prolong the life of linear for both sides of the equation and potentially continue that revenue stream in substantial magnitude and slow down the transition to big tech becoming the primary source of video entertainment. A win-win for both sides and the beginning of a trend I would think of how old media will deal with historical distributors,” the **Liberty Media** Chairman said during a far-reaching Q&A on the **SCTE** Cable-Tec Expo main stage Tuesday. Kudos to **Liberty Global** CEO *Mike Fries* who queued up Malone on a wide range of topics, including AI, inflation and even net neutrality. Malone, who appeared via video monitor, offered up

some things not to be afraid of with artificial intelligence, describing how Johns Hopkins is using AI to look at routine info from hospital patients to predict the onset of sepsis. That doesn’t mean he doesn’t acknowledge the risks with AI and how it can have an impact on employment, particularly in communications and media. As for net neutrality, Malone said it essentially from a content POV turned over the internet to Big Tech with the regulatory world creating a disconnect between investment and network capacity. “Given the size of big tech and their interest in the industry and the video and entertainment industries, they can essentially buy anything away from old media and stick it on the internet,” he said. “What we understand is that when you take a live event and put it on a linear channel, the capacity you utilize is pretty small. When you take that type of event, let’s say Sunday Night Football, and you’re going to stream it to every individual household, the strain that puts on the network is enormous... But the big tech company that chooses to do that has no incremental costs in that changing technology.” Fries noted that 60% of internet traffic globally is created by six companies, and in Europe, regulators are debating “Fair Share,” which would have **Netflix** and others pay for access. Fries ended the interview with a lightning round of questions for Malone, starting with his prediction on whether Disney will still own **ESPN** in five years. “No.” You’re a long-term buyer of one of these—Disney or Netflix? “Netflix.” You’re a long-term buyer of one of these—Apple or Google? “That’s hard. Google.” The government wins the antitrust case against Google? “There’s a settlement.” **Microsoft** and **Activision**, good or bad? “Good for Microsoft.” The IPO market comes back in 2024 or 2025? “25.” “Yellowstone” or “Ted Lasso?” “Ted Lasso.” The most exciting decade for cable, is it in the past or future? “Future.” Natch.

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BREAKING FROM CABLE-TEC EXPO

Xumo President *Marci Jenckes* announced that the **Charter** and **Comcast** jv has just inked a deal to have **Mediacom** deploy the Xumo Stream Box. The announcement was made at a standing-room only session on the show floor at **SCTE** Cable-Tec Expo.

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Xumo execs announced earlier this month that Charter would be the first to release the box to customers with Comcast expecting to market it to households soon. More details on the Mediacom deal are expected to arrive Wednesday, but sources indicate Mediacom plans to make the device available to its broadband-only customers.

COMCAST, BROADCOM EMBEDDING AI IN NEW CHIPSET

Comcast and Broadcom are joining forces to create the first access network powered by AI with a new chipset that embeds AI and machine learning within the nodes, amps and modems that form the last few miles of Comcast’s network. The new chipset will be the first in the world to implement DOCSIS 4.0 Full Duplex, Extended Spectrum and the ability to run both simultaneously. The development will also allow for the automation of more network functions and the delivery of actionable insights. The companies expect to start trials in early 2024 with the goal to begin deployments of the new chipset in live networks before the end of next year.

CARR ON WHY THIS TITLE II DEBATE IS DIFFERENT

FCC Commissioner Brendan Carr made one thing clear during a presser Tuesday: he is voting no on an NPRM to reclassify broadband as a Title II service at the agency’s open meeting Thursday. He does think the debate this time around is a bit different than the 2017 bout over Title II, and thankfully part of that is that the uproar around the issue is much quieter than before. “I’m hoping that some of that is because people feel a little bit chastened by the false sort of apocalyptic predictions from last time, but maybe I’m wrong,” he said. With many of the agency’s resources now being directed toward the Title II framework, Carr’s fear is that a number of pressing issues at the FCC are going to be ignored entirely, including spectrum. “We should be identifying candidate bands that we want to move into the pipeline... once we get that candidate band, we’re going to take it to Congress and say, look, we do have a spectrum plan so give us our authority,” he said. What he most hopes doesn’t happen is that the FCC loses the bipartisan spirit that has become its trademark during its extended period of time with a 2-2 split. He believes that commissioners gained a muscle memory for compromise and for friendly relationships that hadn’t existed at the FCC in the past. “I’m hopeful and confident that that muscle memory of working together for two years is not going to atrophy overnight or, in my view, hopefully ever at all,” he said.

PARAMOUNT TO SHUT DOWN SHOWTIME SPORTS

Say goodbye to Showtime Sports. Paramount is shutting it down at the close of 2023 after 37 years. “As we evolve our strategy to more efficiently allocate resources and align our content offering across the business, we’ve made the difficult decision not to move forward with boxing and other content produced by the Showtime

Sports team. Showtime will continue to air and support the remaining 2023 boxing slate and honor obligations through the end of the year,” Paramount said in a statement. This also means the exit of Showtime Sports President Stephen Espinoza, according to SBJ.

VIDGO OUTAGE CONTINUES

It’s now been over two weeks since Vidgo’s live TV service went down due to a vendor dispute, and the timeframe for when it’ll go live again remains to be seen. The outage began September 29 in what the company attributed to “a dispute with a vendor who changed the terms on Vidgo in the middle of the contract and forced the new terms on Vidgo after hours on Friday night.” Vidgo’s live network lineup includes Fox, ESPN, Hallmark Channel, HGTV, MTV, Freeform and Univision. A Vidgo exec told CFX that there aren’t any plans to shut down the service despite the prolonged dispute, and the company has begun offering a two-week credit to all subscribers and a \$10 discount for the next six months. “We have been working in good faith with the vendor involved and believe we are making solid progress. We do anticipate a full return of service in the near future. While we do not have a specific timeline, we will continue to share new information and updates,” the company said in a Facebook post which has since been deleted.

CABLE-TEC EXPO NOTEBOOK

CableLabs CEO Phil McKinney started Tuesday’s Cable-Tec Expo by imploring attendees to take time during the 40th anniversary of the show to let retiring SCTE CEO Mark Dzuban know how appreciative they are of the work he’s done and the foundation he’s laid for the industry. The crowd responded by giving Dzuban a standing ovation. Dzuban’s not completely stepping away as he expects to become more involved with the SCTE Foundation, its Energy 20/20 program and more. Dzuban said SCTE is approaching 30,000 members and still growing and that Expo has evolved into something more than a conference. “It’s a testament to the unwavering spirit of our industry,” he said. – If Cable-Tec Expo feels a bit wonkier, you’re not imagining it. Organizers have added a policy track to the conference and NCTA’s Cable Broadband Academy (previously known as the Broadband & Cable Policy Summit) was moved to Denver and held Monday ahead of Expo. The Academy and its predecessor strive to facilitate the exchange of ideas to educate state legislators about broadband, cable technology and policy issues. Expo’s lineup includes speakers from USDA, NTIA, CTA and policy execs within member companies. – Denver welcomed more than 720 attendees to Monday’s night annual Cable TV Pioneers banquet. It marked the organization’s fourth consecutive sell-out for the dinner. Thirty-five men and women were inducted, including a special “Tech Ten” a group of behind-the-scenes people who have enabled new, critical services to launch at scale. “We do have a big class tonight. That’s what we get for having so many fabulous people in our industry,” quipped Pioneers Chair Yvette Kanouff. Touching moment to have Cary Danielson Pandzik in the room, the widow of NCTC founding president Mike Pandzik, who passed away in November.

2023 WIT AWARD WINNER

Lifting Others is a Top Priority for Cox's Megan Dover

By Noah Ziegler

The annual Women in Technology Award, presented jointly by The WICT Network, SCTE and Cablefax, is given to a woman whose professional achievements have extended beyond her company to impact and advance the cable telecommunications industry as a whole. This year's recipient, Megan Dover of Cox Communications, has consistently risen to the challenge over the course of her 25-year career.

Megan Dover joined Cox after graduating from the University of Georgia, starting as a Marketing Assistant and climbing to her current role of VP, Product Development and Management for Cox Business. She's now responsible for ensuring customers have the best experience throughout the course of their relationship with the company. Her achievements range from spearheading the reinvention of Cox's self-install experience for its video services, to leading the execution of the launch of products, features and other innovations that impact customers. But above those achievements is what Dover values greatly: the people she does it with.



We spoke with Dover about her journey through Cox and the field of technology, how she stays ahead of the curve in a rapidly evolving space and the importance of simply lending a hand to others. Edited excerpts of the conversation follow.

What was your reaction when you first learned that you won this award?

Very surprised. I did not expect to win. There are so many amazing women in this industry that I've gotten to know over the years and so many just brilliant and talented women who've won the award in the past that I was beyond honored that I get to join their ranks. So pure surprise.

When you graduated from college with a degree in journalism and public relations, what did you envision your career looking like at that time?

I really thought I would end up with a role in a corporation, so similar to what I've ended up doing, but had thought it would be more as a part of a public relations or communications team. I'll say I was pretty active in politics in college especially. I had a good friend who envisioned making it all the way to the White House, and I had this dream of being his spokesperson. So other than that slight dream there, I really thought I was going to end up in corporate life. What I didn't anticipate was that I would have the opportunity right out of college to start with a company like Cox Communications and to be able to stay here for over 25 years.

Since the beginning of your career at Cox, you've held several roles in product management and marketing. How have those two fields evolved, and what do you do to stay ahead of the curve?

Marketing has become incredibly scientific, and we've gotten much more sophisticated. When I first started with Cox in Ma-

con, Georgia, in a marketing role, we were doing all of our own creative at the system level. So if you think about Cox having over 20 different markets even today, each market was doing their own advertising. I was personally writing scripts and then sitting side-by-side with a local TV production person and creating TV spots. And a lot of my marketing leaders at the time were making decisions based off of gut, which is not something you would ever hear happening today. There's so much access now to advanced analytics and technology for marketing teams to really target and

personalize advertising. I never could have imagined that it would be that disciplined when I first started out, and I think AI is a place that we're really going to see another renaissance in the marketing space.

For product management, I think we've become significantly more disciplined as well. We're really savvy at analyzing our product portfolios, understanding where our gaps are. As we're thinking about how we develop products we are doing so starting from the very beginning thinking about what the right customer and employee experience should be as they interact with the product. We've embraced a lot of the newer development processes.

Not many people can say that they have spent over 25 years at the same company. What is it about Cox that keeps you there?

Several years ago, we had done a trip with my family and we had visited a couple of national parks. I was gone for about two weeks. It was an amazing trip. I didn't miss being in the office at all, but after being gone for a couple of weeks, driving back in and badging in, I realized I was incredibly excited to be back to work. I realized I had this stupid grin on my face—I was so happy to be walking back in the door. It just struck me differently than it ever had before. I knew I was lucky to be at a company like Cox, but that particular morning and having that realization that I was very happy to be away, but I wasn't dreading going back to work. How many people get to say that, right? That they are genuinely happy to walk back in the door of their office building when they come back from time away. And it's the people. I work with fantastic people. It really does feel like family in a lot of ways to me, and getting to work with them on a daily basis is just incredibly special.

What were some of the challenges that you encoun-

tered as a woman rising through the ranks in the field of technology?

Growing up, I had teachers reinforce this belief that I wasn't good at math. I think you hear that from a lot of women and girls, and I think there's a lot of focus now on making sure that girls are really supported in math and science. That wasn't a thing when I was going through school. So I can look back and see that there were really critical points in my education where someone could have encouraged me, and I would have likely ended up—I don't know if on a completely different path, but it would have made a difference for me. Part of the journalism and public relations degree that I pursued was in part because it had very, very little math. I was actively trying to avoid it. But part of it was that belief in myself and nobody tried to encourage me otherwise. I would just encourage everybody to think about the influence that you have on other people, especially kids, and go out of your way to encourage their strengths and if they do have areas of weakness work with them to overcome it rather than reinforcing those kinds of things.

You've been active in community-related activities. Why is important to give back?

Most recently, I had the opportunity to represent Cox at the Boys and Girls Club. I helped them with their Southeast Youth of the Year selections. I'm also really active in our church with the youth group and in Boy Scouts of America. Boy Scouts and something that's really close for our family. My son just got Eagle Scout and my daughter helped start an all-female Boy Scout troop a couple of years ago when Boy Scouts changed their rules to allow female scouts. So she's on her way to Eagle too.

My participation as an adult volunteer in any of these different organizations is really about enabling kids to participate. If you don't have adults volunteering, then kids aren't going to have an organization to be a part of, and I think that kids benefit by being around a lot of different kinds of people and having different kinds of experiences. Whether it's Boys and Girls Club or Boy Scouts or church events, they just deliver different experiences than they may have in their day-to-day lives. It's really important for kids to learn how to speak to and interact with adults and to have those kinds of positive interactions. Kids that are participating in these kinds of organizations and having great conversations and positive conversations with adults are really preparing to advocate for themselves in their education with teachers and professors. They're preparing for interviews.

Is there a moment in your career that you are particularly proud of?

Very early in my career, I was hiring someone and my leader at the time questioned the candidate choice that I brought him. So when he questioned me about it, it was an uncomfortable situation. But he was concerned not about her qualifications, and he wasn't concerned about her ability to do the job, he was concerned that her husband's career would require her to move and that we would not have her on our team for very

long. Candidly, I was speechless. But I quickly recovered and I put together a really strong argument for why he was wrong and we ultimately made the right hire. But the easiest thing for me would have been, especially at that point in my career, to go along with the direction that I was getting from a leader. I don't think anybody would say today that it would have been a right thing to make a decision about whether to hire her not based off of anything that was going on with her husband's career. So as I look back, I'm really proud of me at that point in time in my career and my willingness to stand up for someone for something that I thought was the right thing to do. The best part of the decision is that I've been proven right over and over again. She's actually still with Cox Communications. She's been here for over 20 years now.

Are there any tech trends, initiatives or innovations that you're paying close attention to?

In this day and age, we would be remiss if we didn't talk about AI. We're definitely paying close attention to how we would potentially use it at Cox and then across the industry. But I also think it's incredibly important that we're mindful of how we're leveraging it to make sure that we're getting to really good outcomes and better outcomes by using it. I would say the other pieces, I have spent a chunk of my career at Cox in the video space, and it's continuing to adjust rapidly. So certainly keeping a really close eye on the changes that are happening in that space.

What advice do you have for young women first starting a career in cable or technology?

I always start career conversations by asking people to think about what's important to them in a career, I think we get so caught up sometimes on promotions and titles and trying to get to particular levels that you lose sight of what is really important in your day-to-day life, about the job you do. And so I ask people to step back and think about what that list looks like. It's fine if a particular title or salary requirements are at the top of your list, but what I find is so often it really is about people working for a leader that they like and respect, or it's doing the kind of work that they enjoy on a daily basis and being a part of a team that they like being a part of. I do believe that if you are doing work and are a part of a group that you enjoy, then you're going to be producing results that are phenomenal.

The other piece is asking people to make sure they've got a really strong personal and professional support system. I think people think about that more in their personal life versus professional, but even in our professional space, we need people who are going to tell us what it is that we need to hear and not just what we want to hear—and this is back to just the importance of getting really candid feedback from leaders. I also think it's important that we're finding those people to kind of champion and look out for us. That's not always about championing us in talent conversations, it's people coming back and sharing with you what's going on in the organization so that you are better set to prepare for what the next opportunity is.