

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

That's a Wrap: CableLabs CEO Talks DOCSIS 4.0, Expo and SCTE Leadership

SCTE Cable-Tec Expo wrapped up its 40th conference last week, and the prevailing sentiment was that the show felt different this year, in a good way.

"I think there's a lot of energy on the floor on DOCSIS 4.0, with both the vendor community but also the CableLabs members like Comcast and Charter having their own booths and Comcast's recent [announcement](#) on the 4.0 deployment here in Colorado," CableLabs CEO Phil McKinney told CFX.

While DOCSIS 4.0 has long been a key topic at Expo, there are real fruits around the standard this year, with Charter gearing up to launch 4.0 next year and Comcast deploying it in select areas of Atlanta and Philly later this year. CableLabs has held two interops for 4.0 and has another planned in November that will focus on proactive network maintenance. Expo helped crystallize that DOCSIS 4.0 really is here. Walking the show floor, vendors were displaying the smart amps, taps, RPDs and all the elements for an operator to piece together what they need for the deployment.


"The other big thing is we're celebrating the 40th year of the show. Historically, it has always been focused on field operations, field engineering. Last year, we started to make a few changes. This year, though, we made more changes to expand the community," explained McKinney. "The community that comes to the show is no longer just about aluminum ladders, safety belts and bucket trucks. It's much more of the broad

ecosystem that's needed to all come together for the industry."

Those changes included adding a policy track to the show, which resulted in 75 state legislators from around the country attending as well as 25 or so state broadband leaders. Organizers also added separate programming aimed at security, including hosting a CISO panel during Wednesday's general session. Attendance figures signal that the changes have been well received, with registrants surpassing 2017's Denver Expo in pre-COVID times by 5%.

McKinney, who also hosts "The Killer Innovations" podcast, spoke to CFX from Skyelark, his mobile studio/Prevost bus equipped with four bunks and three slides, which was parked on the Expo show floor and hosted more than 600 visitors during the conference. The bus' roof has High Performance Starlink, which is targeted for those who need constant internet while in motion. He said he generally gets 250 Mbps downstream and 18-20 upstream. He uses freestanding Starlink as well, clocking about four to five months on the road a year. (Fun fact: the bus was originally custom built in 2010 for a Nascar racing team and you can see it featured in Season 2 Episode 1 of Travel Channel's "Extreme RVs.")

The bus was especially helpful in February when McKinney's routine check-up for a hereditary cardiac condition turned into a quadruple bypass. He and his wife stayed in the bus near the Mayo Clinic for four-and-a-half months as he recovered. "It was not anticipated, but I have to give credit to the CableLabs executive team because they just killed it. They never missed




Cablefax
MOST POWERFUL WOMEN
Honoring Women in Cable, Broadband and Fiber

WHERE: The Edison Ballroom, NYC


WHEN: Afternoon of December 6, 2023

ATTEND


Last Year's Honorees Include:




Jessica Fischer
Chief Financial Officer
CHARTER



Channing Dungey
Chairman, Warner Bros. Television Group
WARNER BROS. DISCOVERY



Rita Ferro
President, Disney Advertising
DISNEY



Dalila Wilson-Scott
EVP, Chief Diversity Officer & President,
Comcast NBCUniversal Foundation
Comcast

a beat. Everything kept chugging along,” the CEO said. “My joke is I’m driving the CableLabs people nuts because I have more energy now than I did before I had the procedure.”

Other changes over Expo’s history included SCTE merging with CableLabs at the beginning of 2021. One target of the combination was to hit about \$2 million in synergies within three years. “We beat that Year 1,” McKinney said. “It creates opportunities for both sides. For instance, we’ve got a standards activity underway on the smart amps. But we also have a specification effort. So, we just put those two together. You’ll see more and more of the standards and the CableLabs specification work coming together, which will make the response much faster. We can get the ANSI standards out quicker, which the vendors want.”

With Mark Dzuban announcing his retirement as CEO of SCTE, one of the next items of business will be to hire a new leader for the organization. Despite the new structure with CableLabs, McKinney said it was clear SCTE needed its own leader. CableLabs estimates that the industry will need to hire between 300,000-400,000 new hires over the next four years in the U.S. and Canada. “CableLabs is very focused on the CTOs and CEOs. You’ve got Kyrio that’s really focused on the vendors. SCTE is the field ops,” McKinney said. “I’ve always found it best having people that are really focused on and understand and serve their constituencies. We’ve gone from 11,000-12,000 members for SCTE when we did the acquisition to now over 30,000 in two years. So, we’re on an exponential growth curve. It can be a little challenging trying to keep up with that fast of growth in the members, and we need to serve them, they’re important.”

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NET NEUTRALITY TIMELINE

Mark you calendars for Dec. 14. That’s when comments are due in the FCC’s proceeding to re-establish Title II classification for broadband. Reply comments are due Jan. 17. The agency voted 3-2 along party lines last Thursday to open the proceeding—something Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel had pledged to do once the agency had a Democratic majority. The item appears on track for another 3-2 vote in Q24 with an inevitable court battle to follow.

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DIRECTV DOESN’T BUY DIAMOND SPORTS’ EXTENSION ARGUMENT

DirecTV weighed in on Diamond Sports’ request to have more time to pull together its Chapter 11 bankruptcy plan. While the video provider isn’t necessarily against giving Diamond more time to consider how it will emerge from Chapter 11, it does have some

serious concerns about the lack of progress that has been made in the more than seven months since the initial bankruptcy filing. It called out that most of Diamond’s resources in the early days of Chapter 11 were spent fighting MLB and its teams. “The Debtors recently decided to pursue a similar tactic against DirecTV, one of their largest and most important partners, by using the automatic stay as a sword to demand payments from DirecTV for rights they are no longer providing to DirecTV, while DirecTV is compelled as a result of the Debtors’ own choices to pay MLB for the very same content that MLB no longer provides to the Debtors,” DirecTV said in a court filing Friday. Diamond has petitioned the court for a 60-day extension that would give it until late November to develop a restructuring plan, and MLB has already objected to that ask. Diamond has argued that it needs an extension to continue assessing its key agreements, including those it has with distributors, and to engage in ongoing mediation. But DirecTV said Diamond has “hardly engaged” with it in talks about an extension of their existing distribution agreements, which expire in less than 12 months with no option for a future extension. “The Debtors’ lack of progress and the continuing uncertainty of these cases puts undue pressure on these parties, which are forced to incur costs, contingency plan for innumerable scenarios, and potentially face significant business disruption,” DirecTV said. “Absent substantial progress under strict deadlines, it is inappropriate to compel the various parties in these cases to live in limbo while the Debtors appear to make no meaningful progress toward reorganization.”

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AMAZON LOOKING AT NBA RIGHTS

With Prime Video fully setting its footing as the Thursday Night Football rights holder, Amazon wants to take that momentum onto the hardwood. Front Office Sports reports the company is interested in obtaining an NBA game package for Tuesday or Thursday nights. The league’s current broadcast deal with Disney and Warner Bros. Discovery expires after the 2024-25 campaign and currently pays the league \$2.66 billion/year total. Previous reports indicate the league is seeking to double or triple its yearly payout, though whether that includes someone outside of Disney or WBD remains to be seen with the NBA and two companies still negotiating exclusively. FOS sources indicate the league could strike deals with three to five media rights partners.

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ACTORS, STUDIOS TO RESUME STRIKE TALKS TUESDAY

Talks between the SAG-AFTRA and AMPTP are set to resume Tuesday after the actors’ strike surpassed the 100-day milestone Saturday. “It is clear that the strength and solidarity shown

Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC | www.cablefax.com | 301.354.2101 | Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com | VP/Group Publisher, Cablefax and Cynopsis: Robbie Caploe, 917.974.0640, rcaploe@accessintel.com | Managing Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, swinegardner@accessintel.com | Associate Editor: Noah Ziegler, 301.354.1704, nziegler@accessintel.com | Director of Business Development, Cablefax: Ellen Kamhi, 917.626.5574, ekamhi@accessintel.com | Production Manager: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com | Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, ksmith@accessintel.com | Group Subs/Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com | Annual subscription price: \$1,899.00/year | Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

by our members has sent an unmistakable message to the CEOs,” SAG-AFTRA said in a statement. “As we have repeatedly said, we are ready, willing and able to engage on a moment’s notice to meet and to work across the table to achieve a deal that is worthy of your sacrifice.” Several executives from AMPTP member companies will be on hand for negotiations. The two sides suspended negotiations Oct. 11 after the Guild sent its most recent offer, with AMPTP saying “conversations are no longer moving us in a productive direction.”

FCC THINKS AI COULD HELP IN ROBOCALL FIGHT

The **FCC** is embracing AI in its battle against robocalls. During an **AARP** event Monday, Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* announced that she has shared a proposed Notice of Inquiry with the other commissioners to examine how AI impacts illegal robocalls and texts. The proposal, to be voted on during the Commission’s November open meeting, would open the door for comments on the pros and cons of using AI technologies to protect consumers from the robocalls and texts. The item would also ask if the agency should consider ways to verify the authenticity of legitimately generated AI voice or text content from trusted sources. “We’ve got to get in front of it,” Rosenworcel said during the event. “We believe there are technologies out there and we want to encourage their development to help us get this junk off the line and hold at bay some of those uglier uses you might be concerned about.”

RATINGS

The Season 7 premiere of “Rick and Morty” recorded a .76 L3 rating and 429,000 viewers on Oct. 15, good for the top **Adult Swim** telecast in the A18-49 group year-to-date. The viewership served a 183% spike over Adult Swim’s previous six weeks’ average ratings, also checking in at No. 1 in the time period across all of cable for A18-49, A18-34, A15-54, M18-49, M18-34 and M25-54. – **TLC** checked in as the top cable network without sports among P25-54, W25-54, W18-49 and W18-34 last Monday. That solidified the 16th consecutive week TLC led cable nets without sports among W25-54 and W18-49. Its “90 Day” franchise continued to be the primary boost with “90 Day Fiancé: The Other Way” earning a 1.45 L3 rating among W25-54 and “90 Day: The Last Resort” getting a 1.43 L3 rating in the same group. – **Hallmark Channel**’s longest-running original series “When Calls the Heart” concluded its 10th season having reached 7.3 million unduplicated viewers. Season 10 helped the network be the most-watched entertainment cable net on weekends in prime and total day across households, W18+, P18+ and total viewers, also delivering the most-watched entertainment cable program every Sunday for 12 consecutive weeks among W18+. – **Netflix**’s “Bodies” had 615,000 U.S. households view its premiere episode Thursday during the L+3D window, according to **Samba TV**. The streamer also had the film “Old Dads” record 1.4 million U.S. households watched during the L+2D window.

COMSCORE INTEGRATES ROKU

The media measurement and analytics company **Comscore** has integrated **Roku** into its cross-platform Comscore Campaign Ratings solution. The integration includes **The Roku Channel**, and Comscore is now an approved measurement vendor in Roku’s Measurement Partner Program. Agencies and advertisers will be able to see Roku-specific co-viewing data, which will let clients view the number of people watching the screen and measure audiences within Comscore’s cross-platform, persons-level reporting. Additionally, agencies and advertisers will be able to survey audiences on Roku through Comscore’s Brand Survey Lift which evaluates ad impact.

FIBER FRENZY

Vexus Fiber is giving its network a big boost. The company is expanding and upgrading its network to provide 10 Gbps symmetrical speed to every community it serves across Texas, Louisiana and New Mexico. Vexus is fully funding the \$2.5 million project through existing investors KKR and Oak Hill Capital. – **Mediacom** finished up two fiber expansion projects in Rutland and Williams, Iowa, completing the company’s work in the seventh funding round of the Empower Iowa Rural Broadband Grant Program. Residents and businesses in both areas can now get plans with download speeds of up to 2 Gbps in addition to phone plans.

PROGRAMMING

It’s **Disney+**’s turn on Xfinity’s “Free This Week” program. Now through Sunday, customers can watch Disney+ content including “Muppets Haunted Mansion,” “Werewolf by Night” and “Goosebumps.” – Need help picking a Halloween movie? **Shudder**’s VP Programming *Samuel Zimmerman* could be of assistance. The streamer’s in-house horror curator will host the “Halloween Hotline” Friday from 1-3pm as part of **AMC Network**’s annual “Fearfest” event. Fans can call into the hotline for Zimmerman’s personalized picks. The remaining Fearfest premieres are “When Evil Lurks” (Friday), “Hell House LLC Origins” (Oct. 30) and Season 5 of “The Bouley Brothers’ Dragula” (Oct. 31). All three will be available on Shudder and **AMC+**. – “BlackBerry” will make its TV debut as a three-part limited series Nov. 13 on **AMC**, also available on **AMC+**. Episodes 2 and 3 will be released on Nov. 14 and 15, respectively.

PEOPLE

Optimum named former **Spectrum Enterprise** Head of Marketing *Jennifer Garrett* as its new CMO effective Tuesday. Garrett will be tasked with bolstering the Optimum brand through campaigns and developing an evolved brand platform, also overseeing the company’s acquisition, customer base management and retention lifecycle programs. Garrett was under the **Charter** umbrella for nearly six years and previously spent 11 years at **Cox Communications** in multiple senior sales and marketing leadership positions.