

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## RNC Ready: News Nets Primed for First Live Conventions Since COVID

With the first 2024 presidential debate in the history books, all eyes are turning to the next big stop on the road to Election Day—the Republican National Convention. Tens of thousands of people are set to converge on Milwaukee next week, a stark contrast to 2020 when the city hosted a Democratic National Convention that was downsized and largely remote due to COVID.

Media outlets big and small will be on the ground reporting, but for **Spectrum News Milwaukee**, the convention is literally in its backyard with the **Charter**-owned news network actually located within the convention perimeters. “We have the benefit of being able to cover it on the hyperlocal basis with a team of reporters who live and work and cover Milwaukee and Wisconsin every day,” *Sam Singal*, GVP, Spectrum News, told **CFX**.

The RNC established what’s called Media Row in 2016 as a hub for some of the smaller news outlets covering the convention that don’t erect their own newsrooms at the event. This year, it’s created a Wisconsin Media Row, specifically for local media organizations. Some 24 outlets are participating including Spectrum News, **Gray Television** (on behalf of WEAU and KBJR) and the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. “We have said from the get-go that the 2024 Republican National Convention will be a Wisconsin convention,” RNC Committee on Arrangements CEO *Elise Dickens* said in a statement. “That’s why we’re so excited about our Wisconsin Media Row, the first-of-its-kind

hub for local Wisconsin outlets to connect with a wide range of surrogates. Wisconsin Media Row will be the heartbeat of Media Row—a reflection of how committed our convention and party are to Wisconsin as we head into November.”

Singal hopes that Spectrum News is able to stand out with its local perspective. In addition to its team of political reporters in Milwaukee as well as reporters from its DC bureau, it will send more than 30 people to the convention.

“What I hope is that our reporting will be unique and original and really dig into the issues that are part of the convention, but also we’ll be able to report with more depth than our competitors about what’s happening in Milwaukee—the local delegations, the impact that it’s having on the City of Milwaukee, if there are protests or activities outside the perimeter, we’re going to be incredibly well positioned to cover those as well. I hope that we’re able to tell stories that nobody else is telling.”

Next week’s RNC marks the first in-person convention in eight years. One major difference from 2016 is the importance social media influencers are now playing in the political arena. **TikTok** didn’t even come to the U.S. until 2018. “The parties have recognized that the social aspect of this is important and most of them have invited creators specifically to come in and have access the same way that journalists do,” *Nathan Hurst*, Political Editor for **C-SPAN**, told CFX. “The fact that we have these creator zones at these conventions is just a fascinating change from what we’ve seen in years past.”

C-SPAN has been on a digital-forward mission itself, and

INNOVATE  
ENGAGE  
BELONG

The Future of People

C2HR CON // AUGUST 5-6, 2024 // BROOKLYN, NYC

that will include a strong social media presence during the conventions along with coverage on its television networks. It will provide gavel-to-gavel, uninterrupted convention coverage across its platforms, just as it has done for every RNC and DNC political convention since 1984. C-SPAN's call-in program "Washington Journal" will also be live from Milwaukee 7-10am ET on Sunday and from 7-11am ET, Monday through Thursday.

C-SPAN's TikTok account has nearly a million followers, with recent videos on the campaign trail amassing millions of views. "It's interesting, because we don't have ratings... But we can actually see metrics on social and it's fascinating to see what does numbers on something like TikTok or **Instagram**. And that's a new thing for us to look at," Hurst said. "We've seen a lot of traction recently on TikTok, and it makes sense for us to press on those platforms as much as we can. We want to meet viewers where they are, and we know that there's an interest and hunger for political coverage."

While news teams are gearing up for their first conventions since the pandemic, for the most part, it's like riding a bicycle. "Preparing for a convention post-COVID is really no different than what we did during and before COVID. It's all about finding the right balance between attention to detail and leaving room for the unknown," said **Fox News'** *Doug Rohrbeck*, SVP of Washington News and Politics. "It doesn't matter if you're inside the arena or on a rooftop. You bring your star power, research the speakers and themes of the day, and deliver a high-energy production to match the moment."

Special coverage emanating from Milwaukee will begin on Sunday with Fox News Sunday's *Shannon Bream* anchoring live coverage on **FOX** broadcast network. Fox News will have coverage throughout the week, with nightly specials at 10pm Monday through Thursday hosted by *Bret Baier* and *Martha MacCallum*.

While Spectrum News has the home team advantage for Milwaukee, **NewsNation** gets its chance when the Democratic National Convention heads to Chicago in August. The conventions are new territory for the **Nexstar**-owned network, with WGN America relaunching as NewsNation in March 2021. It's roaring to go, kicking off coverage Sunday with a special edition of "The Hill" at 10am ET live on location from inside the convention area.

"With NewsNation based in Chicago, along with our political media powerhouse, Washington D.C. based The Hill, we are uniquely positioned to deliver extensive coverage on every aspect of the RNC and DNC conventions," said Sean Compton, President of Nexstar's Networks division. "From live speeches and breaking news from the convention floor and on the campaign trail, to taking the temperature of voters regarding the issues that are of utmost importance to them, our goal is to offer viewers unbiased, accurate and up-to-the-minute reporting in the race for the 2024 Presidency."

## The **WHO** and the **WHY**

CFX's spotlight on recent new hires & promotions



JARED  
**Grud**  
CEO  
GRACENOTE

### 3 THINGS TO KNOW

- Jared recently took over the reins of Gracenote, the content data business unit of Nielsen. He'll be tasked with continuing Gracenote's growth and product development as Nielsen looks to dive deeper into its convergent TV strategy. Jared arrives from Ethiqly, a venture-backed education technology company he co-founded that uses AI to offer a digital hub for teachers and students in order to build their confidence and skills as writers.
- Prior to Ethiqly, Jared spent over a year as Chief Strategy Officer of the banking company Chime and 3.5 years in the same role at Snap, while also holding the positions of Head of Content and Head of International Market Development. Other stops include CEO of *Huffington Post*/SVP, News and Information for Verizon, General Counsel and Global Head of Corporate Development at Spotify, Chief Strategy and Business Development Officer of AOL and Managing Counsel and Executive Management Team for the Americas at Google.
- Jared has quite the educational background, holding a Bachelor's from the University of Pennsylvania, a J.D. from the University of Chicago Law School and a Master's of Business Administration from Columbia University. Though his time in the classroom hasn't stopped—he's on the Advisory Council and is a Lecturer in Law for UChicago, an Adjunct Professor of Entrepreneurship at the University of Southern California and an Adjunct Associate Professor at Columbia.

## **BERYL RECOVERY**

The **FCC's** Wednesday status report for Texas counties impacted by Hurricane Beryl showed 527,700 cable and wireline companies without service. That's down from 803,501 the day before. The FCC said 19.6% of the cell sites in the affected area are out of service, down from 28.7% yesterday. **Comcast** reported Wednesday that approximately 36% of its service interruptions were restored in the first 36 hours after the storm moved through the Greater Houston area. **Charter** said on social media that some of its services in Texas had been affected by a third-party infrastructure issue caused by the impact of Hurricane Beryl, but by 7:30pm ET Tuesday services were restored. **AT&T** and non-profit Information Technology Disaster Resource Center have deployed a Mobile Connectivity Center, an air-conditioned hub with charging stations, laptops

and free WiFi. On Tuesday, AT&T's Network Disaster Recovery and Drone Operations teams deployed a Flying COW (Cell on Wings) in Matagorda County to provide critical wireless service to a local hospital and customers in the surrounding area. The provider is also waiving talk, text and data overage charges for wireless customers in affected areas.

.....

### CNN LAYOFFS LOOM AMID ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

It's been just under a year since *Mark Thompson* took over as chief of **CNN**, and he's bringing quite a few changes to the network. In a memo sent to employees, he announced the company is merging the newsgathering and digital news teams that currently cover U.S. domestic and international news. The combined structure will be labeled as the Global News organization. CNN is also diving back into expanding its digital products portfolio, including a CNN.com subscription product that'll launch before the end of 2024. "We want to build on CNN.com's reach with a new focus on engagement and frequency—how long our users spend with us and how often they return—by improving the quality of the product experience and giving users powerful reasons to come back to us more often," Thompson said in the memo. It'll also launch two dedicated FAST channels from **CNN Originals** and **CNN en Español**. With the changes Thompson is bringing to CNN will also come some layoffs. "The number of colleagues potentially impacted is around a hundred out of a workforce of more than 3,500, but I don't underestimate the impact this news is likely to have on everyone affected and want to thank them for everything they've done for this great news company over the years," the memo said.

.....

### OPTIMUM BUSINESS LAUNCHES L.L.B. GRANTS

**Optimum Business** is teaming up with the Southwest Louisiana (SWLA) Economic Development Alliance to create L.L.B. Grants, a program that'll fund 30 businesses across five parishes in the southwest Louisiana area. L.L.B. Grants will award \$3,000 grants to each selected business to support growth and their ability to provide for customers and communities. The SWLA Economic Development Alliance will also give grant winners a basic membership to the Chamber SWLA, which comes with access to programs and services that offer more resources. To apply, businesses must meet the requirements of having a brick-and-mortar location in Optimum's service area, have been open for a minimum of two years and have 10 or fewer employees. Applications are due Aug. 16.

.....

### RATINGS

We're almost at the end of UEFA Euro 2024, and through the quarterfinal telecasts **Fox Sports 1** and **Fox** are averaging 1.5

million viewers. That's a 42% improvement from the equivalent point in the 2021 edition (1.06 million). The quarterfinal matches averaged 3.57 million viewers on Fox, which is an 89% improvement vs the 2021 quarterfinals average. – **Warner Bros. Discovery** nets finished 2Q24 with two nights of more than a 60% share, nine nights of more than a 50% share and 28 nights of more than a 40% share of primetime cable viewing among A18-49. That was helped by new programs like **Food Network's** "24 in 24: Last Chef Standing," **Investigation Discovery's** "Quiet on Set: The Dark Side of Kids TV" and **TBS'** newly acquired show "The Big Bang Theory." WBD claimed 35% of adult primetime cable viewing over the quarter while also recording more than 147 million total viewers on average each month—4 million more than 1Q24. **TNT** was the top cable entertainment network in total day and prime among A25-54, with TBS taking the No. 2 spot in that same category and demo.

.....

### USA TO AIR OLYMPICS IN 4K

**NBCUniversal** is taking its Olympics coverage up a notch. It's making **USA's** 24/7 coverage of the games available in 4K HDR with Dolby Atmos audio. USA's programming, which begins at 8am on July 24 and wraps up at 5:30pm on Aug. 11, will focus on Team USA and team sports including basketball, soccer, beach volleyball, water polo, track and field and more. Over 400 total hours of 4K coverage will be on USA. Partners that offer USA in 4K include **Altice USA, Comcast, Cox, DirecTV/DirecTV Stream, DISH, Fubo, Verizon, YouTube TV** and select participating members of **NCTC**.

.....

### PROGRAMMING

**FX** unveiled a few premiere dates for upcoming new and returning series. The documentary "Lie to Fly" will debut Aug. 23 at 10pm. Comedy "English Teacher" will premiere Sept. 2 at 10pm with the first two episodes. Season 2 of "The Old Man" will begin Sept. 12 at 10pm with the first two episodes. "American Sports Story: Aaron Hernandez" will begin with two episodes Sept. 12 at 10pm, and the docuseries "Social Studies" will premiere Sept. 27 at 10pm with two episodes. English Teacher, The Old Man, American Sports Story: Aaron Hernandez and Social Studies will all stream the next day on **Hulu** and will be coming soon to **Disney+** internationally. – **Fox Weather** will start to simulcast on **Fox Business** during weekday mornings from 5-6am. It'll begin Monday with "Fox Weather First" and lead into Fox Business' "Mornings with Maria."

.....

### PEOPLE

*John Malkin* has left **Ovation TV** after nearly nine years. The long-time affiliate sales pro served as the art network's EVP of Affiliate Sales and Marketing. He's also done stints at **Fox News** and the **NFL**. Malkin wrote in a LinkedIn post that he'll be assessing the next steps in his career over the next several months.



## Think about that for a minute...

### Accepting the Obvious

Commentary by Steve Effros

It's pretty hard to miss. Prices in the telecommunications business are going up rapidly. Service, or at least choice when using individual services is being curtailed. It's not because there isn't enough competition. It's because there's so much of it! It's time some folks accepted the obvious; the long-held assumptions that promoting competition would always result in benefits for consumers has simply not turned out to be true. Sort of like "trickle down economics."

I won't spend much time on that last point because it tends to result in political tribalism arguments. I would simply note that when taxes get cut on the very rich, or large corporations get away with paying very little, they both get richer and larger. The increasingly obvious result of new technology spawning massive competitive pressure seems to be doing the same thing in our end of the world.

Think about what you are experiencing as a consumer of video, for instance. There has been a consistent regulatory push for more and more competition. The new technologies, such as broadband, fixed wireless and satellite distribution have resulted in the explosion of "streaming video." That, in turn, has essentially resulted in the deterioration and probably the elimination, at some point, of the linear video distribution experience. In other words, "cable," and maybe even traditional "broadcast" channels, offering linear video viewing, are giving way to the "a la carte" experience of buying what you want to see when you want to see it.

But as we have all witnessed, it's not quite that simple. The purveyors of video have found that there's a fly in that ointment. Trying to sell individual video product is extremely difficult and expensive. How do you get the viewing public to know about and choose to order, and pay for that "a la carte" purchase? The cost of production always goes up, and now the cost of promotion is skyrocketing as well. What to do?

Well, we've all seen what's being done. Consumers are increasingly not being offered the option of seeing just what they want, they have to buy a package of video products, and those packages are now being bundled together, as some of us have predicted for a long time, because the economics require that.

The alternatives, of course, are higher "unbundled" prices or a watering down of the "what you want" part of the equation by forcing advertising into the stream.

The trend of higher costs, lower subscribership and more competition is affecting everyone. Take Public Broadcasting, for instance. Let's not even get into the reality that many of the programs now brought to you on "non-commercial" television have commercials in them. Let's just note that local stations have, for years, offered a "bonus" service for those willing to pay a monthly fee (they call it a donation). For that fee you got an archive of the best of their programs to watch whenever ("Passport" in my community.)

But now some of the "good stuff," the documentaries, are being taken out of the archive. They are now in a new streaming channel called "PBS Documentaries" which costs \$5.99 a month. I'm not complaining about that, I understand it. The competition and the price of production has gone up and the viewership is more expensive to sustain. Hence, it costs consumers more. Got it. Fierce competition for the best product has resulted in consumers paying more, and the irony is that it would appear there is also a forced trend back toward bundling, advertising support as a second revenue stream, and the biggest aggregators becoming totally dominant (think Google TV, Amazon Prime, Apple TV and the like).

Maybe it's time we all acknowledged the obvious, that our long-held assumptions have not yielded what we had hoped. Time to re-think.



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.)*

Most Powerful Women **Cablefax**

December 4, 2024 | City Winery, NYC

**NOMINATE NOW**

Cablefax recognizes the 2024 Most Powerful Women for outstanding qualities including influence and leadership within the cable and broadband industry, as well as dedication to empowering other professionals to grow and thrive. Join us in honoring these women who break boundaries and set new standards.