

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

WIT Winner Sandy Howe p4

Bridging the Gap: Bryte IQ Makes Splash at TechExpo

Charter is bringing its network and application developers closer together with **Bryte IQ**, a network-as-a-service platform for the company's wired and wireless networks. Developed in collaboration with **CableLabs**, the application programming interface (API) framework allows developers to seamlessly deploy their services across communications networks. It grants those developers access to tools to test and deploy their services, visibility into connected devices and overall management of the home network.

"We're creating a federated network-as-a-service environment with all this secret sauce. It is going to change the game because we're building this incremental capacity, and there needs to be amazing applications or use cases that take advantage of that," Charter EVP, Product *Danny Bowman* said during a session at **SCTE's TechExpo** on Tuesday.

The session included appearances from a number of early collaborators illustrating how they plan to leverage Bryte IQ, and that list included **Meta**. *Larry Alder*, Meta's Director, Connectivity Ecosystems, spoke on how his group works together with service providers to improve the quality of experience for end users, particularly when those users are trying to use one of Meta's voice, video or VR applications.

Alder started analyzing why some users were experiencing glitches in their calls on WhatsApp or buffering while trying to watch an Instagram Reel, even in homes that were subscribing to gigabit plans from their provider.

"Bandwidth is not the issue. The issue is these applications are latency sensitive," Alder said. "There needs to be a signaling mechanism effectively, to tell the API 'this traffic is of this type. This is how you can manage it and handle its constraints.'"

Meta collaborated with CableLabs and set up a simulation to determine what happened if, at times of significant traffic, a traffic management technology called WiFi QoS was turned on in the home. Earlier this year, Meta ran large-scale field trials across millions of homes to test the technology. By turning on the feature, it saw a 30% decline in calls with poor quality across platforms like WhatsApp.

"We as content providers, we see one view of the world. We see our application. We see things like call drops, slow starts, jitter in the voice quality. The service provider sees different things. They see things like bandwidth and latency," he said. "It's really putting that view together to improve the quality where the magic is."

Other partners presenting during the session included **Onboard**, and CTO *Justin Donohoo* said Bryte IQ would allow the company to streamline its operations and to provide a better tech amenity support experience to residents across a number of MDUs across the U.S. **Assurant** President, Connected Living Products *Scott Wagner* shared how the Connected Devices ID API allows his company to quickly identify connected devices in an environment to eliminate the manual process of customers adding their products to Assurant's Pocket Geek Home technical support app.

Bowman encouraged anybody interested in the platform to check out the Bryte IQ [website](#), a destination that includes a number of resources for the developer community and others curious as to what Bryte IQ has to offer. "We have whitepapers. We're going to be marketing to all of the developers around the country. We'll have testimonials," Bowman said. "We're going to help people onboard."

Bryte IQ is part of an industry-wide effort, so users who live in other network operator's footprints will be able to unlock similar experiences, according to the site's FAQ. MSOs that want to learn more can also get information on how to participate on the website.



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TECHEXPO NOTEBOOK

Quality of experience was the focus of **SCTE TechExpo** from the top of Tuesday's Headliner session. SCTE CEO *Maria Popo* told the crowd that the industry is shaping a new time dubbed the "Experience Era" where seamless connectivity is the name of the game. Reliability and speed will become table stakes and users will demand seamless connectivity as they engage with various applications. "That's why it's important that we work together and we enable optimal experiences across all the online experiences by fostering alignment, driving scale and a healthy ecosystem for operators and vendors. The network fades into the background, and we can focus on activity, not technology," she said. – **Rogers Communications** is implementing **Comcast's** network design in what the two call an industry-first collaboration. Being able to follow Comcast's network playbook will allow the Canadian operator to quickly upgrade its footprint and get on a path to launch DOCSIS 4.0 and offer plans with symmetrical speeds.

COX SUES RHODE ISLAND OVER BEAD PLANS

The BEAD drama is ramping up in Rhode Island. On Monday, **Cox Communications** filed a lawsuit to prevent the state from embarking on its plan to use the \$108 million of allocated BEAD money from **NTIA**. Cox claims Rhode Island's current broadband map will lead to redundant broadband infrastructure. While the state used the **FCC's** broadband map as a foundation, Cox claims that it has locations where it provides service that could be overbuilt with BEAD funding. "Rather than using taxpayer funds to ensure high-speed access to all Rhode Islanders—including low-income Rhode Islanders in need—the Commerce Corporation has devised a program that will benefit wealthy parts of the state already with high-speed internet," the complaint said. Of course, the **Rhode Island Commerce Corporation** feels differently, claiming that Cox failed to engage in the public planning process on how BEAD money would be distributed throughout the state. "Cox did not submit public comments on the design of the BEAD program, did not raise concerns at public Broadband Advisory Council meetings (where they are the sole provider represented), and declined to share its network map information during the 90-day Rhode Island Broadband Map Challenge Process. Our planning process was open and participatory, and Cox did not participate," R.I. Commerce Corp. said in a statement. "Let's be clear about what's behind Cox's lawsuit: It is an attempt to prevent the investment of \$108.7 million dollars in broadband infrastructure in Rhode Island, likely

because it realizes that some, or even all, of that money may be awarded through a competitive process to other internet service providers."

PHASE TWO OF PARAMOUNT LAYOFFS UNDERWAY

A second wave of layoffs hit **Paramount Global** in the U.S. on Tuesday. It's part of the company's previously announced plan to reduce its workforce as it hopes to slash 15% over the course of three total phases. It's unclear which specific areas the layoffs will impact, but co-CEOs *George Cheeks*, *Chris McCarthy* and *Brian Robbins* indicated in a memo that the reductions are almost complete. "In order to set Paramount up for continued success, we are taking these actions, and after today, 90% of these reductions will be complete," the memo said. Time will tell when the final 10% will take place.

NBCU TOPS NIELSEN MEDIA DISTRIBUTOR GAUGE

The month of August was a good one for **NBCUniversal** thanks to the Olympics and Paralympics. **Nielsen's** Media Distributor Gauge saw NBCU jump to the top spot among media companies with 13.4% of total TV usage in August—a 3.9% improvement from July. Specifically, **USA** viewership rose 47%, **Peacock's** streaming viewership increased by 39% and viewing across **NBC** broadcast affiliates jumped 62%. The four-day Democratic National Convention also was a boost as it elevated network viewership by 43% compared to July levels. **YouTube** came second in August's Media Distributor Gauge with 10.6% of TV usage. **Disney** came in at 9.5% while **Netflix** (7.9%), **Paramount** (7.1%) and **Warner Bros. Discovery** (6.9%) followed. However, Disney and Paramount were among folks that fell in viewership from July. Disney's mark dropped 0.4%, Paramount's fell 0.3% and **Fox's** declined by 1.4%. We'll see how much football season helps with that.

CABLE TV PIONEERS ROCK THE NIGHT IN ATLANTA

More than 600 of cable's finest gathered together Monday night for the 58th Cable TV Pioneers Annual Banquet, an event that has long signaled the start of **SCTE's** TechExpo. Pioneers Chair *Yvette Kanouff* and Vice Chair *Jim Gleason* kicked off the night with their version of "Saturday Night Live"'s infamous Weekend Update segment—the Pioneer News Network (PNN

for short). They expertly delivered quips in the show's famous style, incorporating photoshopped images like one of **Cable One** CEO *Julie Laulis* coming second in a cycling race behind *Lance Armstrong*. The red carpet was rolled out for the 21 members of the Class of 2024, but a surprise last-minute program change delighted everyone in the crowd. Retired Charter CEO *Tom Rutledge*, a member of the Class of 2023, was unable to attend last year's ceremony due to a vacation to Japan, so he received a belated in-person welcome to the group this time around. Also taking the stage was *Paul Maxwell*, the founder of *Multichannel News*, *Cablefax* and a number of other trade publications. He lamented the shutdown of the print magazine and daily newsletters of *Broadcasting+Cable*, *Multichannel News* and *NextTV*, passionately speaking about the industry's need for the journalists that cover it. "Our industry won't be the same without them. It's a damn shame," Maxwell said. "Someone needs to compete against *Cablefax*!" Next year's fete is set for Sept. 29 in Washington, D.C., and *Kanouff* is leaving her position as Chair for the affair. It will be *Gleason's* first as Chair of the Cable TV Pioneers.

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WBD TAPS GOOGLE CLOUD FOR AI CAPTIONING

Warner Bros. Discovery is deploying a new AI-powered captioning solution in the U.S., using **Google Cloud's** Vertex AI platform to enhance how WBD can reduce production time and costs when it comes to captioning. It'll be used for unscripted programming at first before being expanded elsewhere. The Vertex AI platform allows WBD to refine and train the caption AI workflow, helping reduce errors and labor. WBD claims the caption AI workflow reduces caption file creation time by up to 80% compared to manual captioning, and it also cuts captioning costs by up to 50%.

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GET WITH THE FLO

FloSports is continuing to invest in its college sports offerings, announcing that come Oct. 15, **FloCollege** will be introduced as a new college sports streaming platform highlighting under-served Division-II and Division-II athletics—while still having Division-I content. It'll feature more than 12,000 live games across 12 NCAA conferences for the 2024-25 season. The starting price will be \$19.99 per month or \$107.88 per year (or \$8.99 per month). FloSports has seen a 37% increase in viewers for football and 45% increase for soccer so far since the start of the 2024 college sports season.

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CARRIAGE

DirectTV is adding 10 more FAST channels from **A+E** for its streaming and satellite customers. The channels are available to customers via the internet, and any satellite customers who want to access the added channels can do so via the DirecTV

app. The new additions include **Crime 360**, **UnXplained Zone**, **Duck Dynasty** and **Ice Road Truckers**.

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RATINGS

College football and the **WNBA** postseason heating up lifted **ESPN** to the top of the weekly primetime ratings leaderboard among cable networks. The sports net barely took the prize with 2.57 million viewers P2+, followed closely by **Fox News** with 2.51 million. ESPN has also enjoyed the early success from "College GameDay," with Saturday's show posting 2.2 million average viewers. The show is also having its best four-episode start in its history. **MSNBC** and **USA** recorded 1.48 million and 780,000, respectively, while **CNN** took fifth with 681,000. Fox News maintained its usual No. 1 place in the total-day ratings with 1.49 million. MSNBC followed with 952,000, while ESPN (848,000), CNN (517,000) and **Hallmark Channel** (349,000) rounded out the top five for total day. – **ESPN** wrapped up another season of Sunday Night Baseball, and the 2024 campaign was the most-watched one since 2019 with an average of 1.51 million viewers, according to **Nielsen**. That's good for a 6% improvement compared to 2023, and ESPN averaged at least 2 million viewers on four occasions this year. Sunday Night Baseball also saw growth within A18-24 (26%), W18-34 (16%) and A18-34 (12%).

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DOING GOOD

Optimum Business and the Southwest Louisiana Economic Development Alliance revealed the 30 recipients of the L.L.B. Grants. Each small business will get \$3,000 to support growth and long-term success. Grant winners include Blue Light Behavioral Services, which provides therapy to children with autism, and Southland Environmental, which offers regulatory and permitting consulting services as well as environmental site assessment and remediation services.

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PROGRAMMING

National Geographic is getting to release "The Devil's Climb" on Oct. 17 at 9pm. It'll follow rock climbers *Alex Honnold* and *Tommy Caldwell* as they attempt to summit the Devil's Thumb in Alaska. **Disney+** and **Hulu** will have it available to stream the next day.

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PEOPLE

Jim Keller is joining **Fuse Media** as its new CRO, reporting to Chairman/CEO *Miguel Roggero*. It's a new position for Fuse Media as it looks to engage with more brands and connect them with underrepresented audiences. Keller, who's previously made stops at **Warner Bros. Discovery**, **Hulu** and **NBCU**, will oversee advertising sales partnerships and initiatives as Head of Ad Sales.

2024 WIT AWARD WINNER

Curiosity is Key for Sandy Howe

By Sara Winegardner

The annual Women in Technology Award, presented jointly by The WICT Network, SCTE and Cablefax, is given to a woman whose influence stretches far beyond her company and helps to advance the entire cable and connectivity industry. This year's winner, Sandy Howe, is known by all not only for her curiosity, but also for her ability to see where technology is going and how it needs to meet the needs of the future.



Pennsylvania native Sandy Howe took a chance after graduating from Penn State and, on the advice of her father, dove into technical sales and the world of fiber optics. She headed to Cisco in 1999 as a Director of Business Development, managing sales for the Time Warner Cable account and consistently beating her quotas. After a decade, she found a new home at Arris and then Technetix, joining the executive ranks and solidifying her reputation as a much-needed voice in any boardroom.

We spoke with Howe about her journey, including her roles now on the boards of pioneering companies like SQUAN and ATX Networks. We also spoke about her time as a board member of associations like NCTA and SCTE, as Past Chair of The WICT Network and how these groups shaped her career and professional development. Edited excerpts of the conversation follow.

Did you always have an interest in technology?

I was very active in central Pennsylvania in 4-H and it allowed you to be curious about a lot of things and to explore and try new things. 4-H has programs like public speaking, which I was very active in. But in high school and even in college, math and science were very hard for me. I barely made it through. It's where I learned to be persistent and keep trying and studying and working and reaching out for help. It was through that persistence that I got through with a Bachelor of Science. I never really thought about technology until when I was graduating I was like 'What am I going to do?' My father said 'You're really good at selling, but if you go into sales, go into technical sales and know it better than any man in that room.' So I went out looking for my technical sales job, and the first company that I was fortunate to get to work for was a spin-off of C-COR, and C-COR was part of Arris at one time. It was in fiber optics. So I started, they were willing to hire me and teach me, and I learned. From there I just kept being curious and growing and I went into being a sales account manager to then a regional manager and followed that career.

Did you always have an interest in technology?

What about the cable and broadband industries have kept you excited throughout your career?

After I learned the basics of engineering and what our products did and how these networks worked, as we added new solu-

tions, high-speed data, voice to the network and now we're doing streaming—the network evolved. The evolution really put everyone on the same page because to be in technology, you had to constantly learn to be curious, be willing to try new things and evolve. So what I think has been wonderful in this industry is we've had such a great opportunity to continue to offer new services. Here we are doing wireless. We're looking at how do we offload as much of that traffic as possible through different technologies. It's so exciting. There's always something new, and because of that newness, again, it kept everyone on the same playing field for learning. I always tell people to take that jump into tech. Everyone's always learning it because it keeps evolving, and that's what has been exciting about the cable industry. The other piece is when I started, we had this fact book that was huge of all the different operators. The operators have consolidated, the manufacturers have consolidated. Even the component companies have consolidated. But the same people that are really good people that care about what's right for the industry and what's right for the network keep landing. I get that wonderful opportunity to keep working with really great people and those relationships really tie you into the cable industry. I'm a firm believer that all boats rise with the rising tide, and so I've always believed when you're working together from the manufacturing side, from the operator side, that if you do what's right for the industry, all our boats are going to rise. That can come from just defining the specs for DOCSIS 4.0, and that took a long time for us to get done. The development can start, and then ultimately we're all going to grow through that deployment because the cable operators are going to be able to offer 10G service very quickly and inexpensively. All the people that have put all the engineering and technology behind it, like at ATX, that infrastructure to support it, we're all going to grow together. It's just that collegial family that we have in the cable industry.

What was a particular moment or challenging time in



your career that you now look fondly back on?

One role that I had when I was at Scientific Atlanta (which became Cisco), they gave me business development. When I first had it, I thought 'I can barely figure out what's going to happen in the next year. How do I see out at least three years because I'm having to help develop our product line.' The one thing I've learned from that is I think everybody has a three-year plan in my house, including my dogs, and I now think so far out. That is actually a benefit I bring into the boardroom because one of your jobs is to help companies see around the corners. One of the hardest things we did, and it was a huge team effort as well as for customers, was the DVR. Who would have thought we could sell a set-top that was \$500? To put that business case together, to figure out what we could charge, getting it to work and not reboot every night—it was truly a team effort. When you have great customers that believed in the solution, saw what it could do with the incremental revenue they could generate and stickiness in their homes, it was really a great opportunity. I will never forget going into a negotiation and them asking 'what's the price?'

What role have industry associations like The WICT Network, SCTE and others played in your personal and professional growth?

Early in my career, I attended all the chapter events. I learned technology from the SCTE and then from The WICT Network, I learned the skills that I needed whether it was negotiation or taking risks or your personal branding, understanding what it takes to get those executive skills. Those organizations were just so important to my career, and then to have the opportunity to give back... I was on the SCTE Foundation board. My father taught me about investing, and I served for the entire time on that board on the Finance Committee with some friends like [Liberty Global VP, Strategy and Technology Bill Warga]. And for The WICT Network, I've seen it change so much because again, when I came in, our finances weren't in good shape. Getting the programs in place and building that foundation, actually promoting what The WICT Network does and then to really see it grow to get to over 10,000 members and international growth. Then the entire rebranding grew with our industry because we realized we needed actually to get more inclusive of the technology companies that are supporting and part of our industry. I was really excited after I left as chair that we left it in good financial shape with membership growth and the

ability to grow into the future with the new brand.

What inspired you to want to get involved as a board member of companies like SQUAN and ATX Networks?

At Arris, we had a very diverse board. Those diverse members were definitely people I looked up to and at that time, I realized I wanted, ultimately, to get into the boardroom. So I became a member of the National Association of Corporate Directors and I spent a lot of time educating myself on what a good board member does. Now, I couldn't be more excited to be working with ATX and SQUAN and having worked with Minim in the past, helping companies grow. I love what I do. I started in sales, so I love things that grow. I've been very fortunate to be part of three companies that have had transactions that were significant. You learn about scaling and you learn how these companies should grow. What I'm able to do in the boardroom is ask those questions so the operating team thinks about what they might need, whether it's from the operations side, the strategy side, or go-to-market on how we can further grow and add shareholder value.



What technology topic or particular innovation are you most closely watching these days?

Obviously AI is huge. Companies are going to begin utilizing it for financial analysis, call centers and those are places I've been working very closely in advisory roles. But also when I think about AI, of course, I think about hyperscale data centers, because without the cloud and these hyperscale data centers, we couldn't even imagine the world of AI because we couldn't get the processing fast enough and close enough to you. When I think about hyperscale data centers, what keeps me up is the power consumption. I really like to see companies, especially on the component side, thinking through how are we going to be more power efficient in these data centers? Because that's key. And then I take another step back and it goes to the infrastructure to support it. We need a lot of fiber to these data centers as well as the power infrastructure. I am worried right now that the power network is at jeopardy because the numbers that I do and the math... with the regulation of the power industry, we can't grow that fast. But what it also makes me think about is that's where technology is best because typically, when there's a challenge like this, we are going to technically figure it out, whether it's nuclear or natural gas. It will force us to get better and it'll have tech behind it, which should hopefully help fuel innovation.