

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Fierce Forces: Cablefax Honors Industry's Most Powerful Women

'Tis the season to celebrate, and **Cablefax** honored its [2024 Most Powerful Women](#) honorees Wednesday at City Winery in New York City.

GFiber Chief Growth Officer *Melani Griffith* celebrated the tremendous explosion of women in operations and technology roles, citing examples of how her organization has embraced gender equity at every level.

"In fact, half of our GMs at GFiber are women. A third of our tech ops leads and half of our product team, including our leader, [Head of Product and Billing *Liz Hsu*], are all women," she said. "In this work, learn, stream, game and everything else from home world, we know that the work we are doing will be ever more important, and the women on this list and the many women behind it are setting the course for that future every day."

The event featured special guest speaker *Jasmyne Spencer*, an **NWSL** legend who most recently played for Angel City FC. Outside of football, she started **Jas It Up**, a sustainable lifestyle brand that aims to inspire and educate individuals to lead an eco-conscious lifestyle. An entrepreneur with a passion for the environment, Spencer spoke not only about her experience as an athlete, but also what pushing herself beyond her self-imposed limits has brought into her life.

"I never thought that I would be a business owner, let alone run a company or sit in rooms like this. I always saw myself

as an athlete first, and it has opened incredible doors for me to meet incredible people, doing work to protect the environment, but just to elevate humanity, bringing people together, bringing resources to underserved communities," Spencer said. "I think what I'm most excited about for the future of Jas It Up is continuing that message and putting it forth into schools and the education program and instilling that belief in the next generation of kids to know that they can empower themselves, they can empower their communities and they can really make an impact."

Receiving Cablefax's 2024 Impact Award was *Stacy London*, former co-host of **TLC's** "What Not to Wear." London has grown into a multi-hyphenate, founding the State of Menopause brand to promote education around women's health and launching her own fashion line on QVC, among other accomplishments. Looking back on all she's done, she sees self-esteem as the linking thread between these major initiatives, and London believes she's pursued these initiatives as much for herself as for anybody else.

"We teach what we need to learn, and I really think that when I think about self-respect, self-kindness, self-esteem, raising yourself up because of the way that you walk out the door and you look in the mirror and you've got a kick in your step, or that you know enough about your physiological health as a female to advocate for yourself in your doctor's office, these are not unrelated topics," she told attendees. "Women should feel good and powerful and present and possible and



The Cablefax team is thrilled to announce this year's honorees for The Most Powerful Women Awards, recognizing the distinguished women leaders who are innovating and inspiring in the media and broadband space.

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capable, and sometimes the world doesn't see us that way."

NESN SVP, Broadcast & Digital Partnerships *Cosmina Schulman* was named this year's Women's Advancement Champion. She transformed NESN's WON employee resource group into a public-facing brand, advocating for women's visibility in sports media and mentoring more than 75 women in her spare time. She continues to lead the charge for gender equity in the traditionally male-dominated space, and she doesn't plan to stop any time soon.

"At NESN, this journey has been more than just about broadcast, that's for sure. It's been about breaking barriers, being a home for women's sports and showing what's possible when we dare to dream boldly," she said. "We've created a home for over hundreds of women's stories at NESN, and I'd like to take this time to just remind us all that behind every great woman are great women."

Cablefax: The Magazine's annual Most Powerful Women issue debuted at the event. The publication asked honorees about the biggest disruption they see for the industry, with AI easily the most-cited answer. "It is amazing to consider the various ways we can leverage AI to simultaneously accelerate and reimagine everything we do. It gives us the power to combine data with human ingenuity," said *Sarah Gustashaw*, SVP of Finance for **Comcast's** West Division. "As I tell my teams, my college freshman, and myself – once we start using AI, the opportunities are endless."

This year's class of MPWs tackled a host of other topics in their Q&As, including a time when they were written off because of their gender.

"I was working at CBS News and the network had broadcast rights to the Olympics. I expected to be sent as part of the team covering the Games since I typically covered big events but didn't make the list. When I asked my boss, he said, 'You have young kids so I assumed you wouldn't want to go on a long, foreign assignment,'" recalled *Kathleen Finch*, **Warner Bros Discovery** U.S. Networks Chairman/CEO. "I reminded him he also had young kids, as did the other men assigned to go. He seemed surprised I called him out but said I was right and apologized." Read insights from all of this year's honorees in the [digital issue](#).

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ESPN NOW ON DISNEY+

After **Hulu** was [added to Disney+ back in March](#), the streamer is launching a new **ESPN** tile and hub to serve as a landing spot for **ESPN+** content for subscribers of the Disney+, Hulu and **ESPN+** bundle in the U.S. SVP, **ESPN+** *John Lasker* said there should be around 5,000 live events available in the first 90 days of the bundle being available. **ESPN** Originals and "30

Cablefax Executive Round Up

We asked some of **Cablefax's Most Powerful Women** what they view as the toughest part of being a leader in the industry.



Kathleen Finch

Chairman and CEO, U.S. Networks

Warner Bros. Discovery

"Keeping creative teams motivated when the future of this industry looks increasingly questionable. Content is still king, but the revenue that was pretty much guaranteed is harder and harder to come by. That's led to creative risk avoidance in favor of nothing but spin-offs and proven IP, which is a really tough way to lead creative teams."



Vicki Lins

President & CEO

CTAM

"Leading through change can be unsettling. It's important to create an environment where people feel supported by making space for questions and addressing concerns openly to empower people to navigate uncertainty and turn challenges into opportunities."



Sheereen Russell

EVP, Client Partnerships & Inclusion Solutions

Warner Bros. Discovery

"Amidst a sea of uncertainty, industry transformation, and headwinds in the media landscape, my biggest leadership challenge is keeping teams inspired, mitigating distrust among internal partners from self-preservation and scarcity mindsets, and empowering teams to take calculated risks and detach from comfort and familiar ways of doing business to innovate new business solutions under pressurized revenue demands."



Stacey Slaughter

CEO

NCTI

"For me it isn't the change or speed of change itself, it is maintaining positive and productive morale within our team as we push ourselves to excel within the change. It has heightened the need for us to have the whole team together (in person), on a regular basis away from our day-to-day responsibilities to just be together, dream big, laugh and support each other."



Meena Soleiman

SVP, Tech Ops & Engineering

Comcast Northeast Division

"It is an exciting challenge to navigate—and stay ahead of—the rapid changes in consumer behavior and technology. With consumers' increased choice, consumption and demand, as well as technological advancements

in content delivery, analytics and customer service, we must, as leaders, continually innovate and invest to be prepared—not just for what's now—but for what's next."

for 30” documentaries will also be available to bundle subs, but for Disney+ standalone customers, they’ll get a curated selection of live sports events, studio shows and ESPN Films in addition to a collection of series and films from Hulu.

FCC TAPS UL SOLUTIONS FOR LABELING PROGRAM

The FCC’s Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau picked **UL Solutions** to be both the Lead Administrator and a Cybersecurity Label Administrator of the commission’s voluntary cybersecurity labeling program for wireless consumer IoT products. The program lets qualifying consumer smart products that meet certain cybersecurity standards display a label, including the new U.S. government-certified U.S. Cyber Trust Mark. The FCC will oversee the program, which includes both the public and private sectors, while authorized third-party administrators will manage activities like evaluating product applications, granting permission to use the label and educating consumers. UL Solutions will be tasked with identifying or developing, and recommending to the FCC for approval, the IoT-specific standards and testing procedures for the program and acting as the liaison between the Commission and CLAs.

DAZN GETS CLUB WORLD CUP

It was once **Apple** that was [nearly signed](#) to be the rights-holder for **FIFA**’s new 32-team Club World Cup tournament, but instead it’s **DAZN** that will be the home of the event. All 63 matches of the Club World Cup will be streamed and free to view on DAZN across the globe, and part of the agreement includes the ability for DAZN to sublicense to local free-to-air linear broadcast networks. The tournament—taking place in the U.S.—will begin June 15 and wrap up July 13. The group-stage opponents will be determined at a draw Thursday at 1pm on DAZN.

TRIO OF DEALS FOR VIAMEDIA

Advertising rep firm **Viamedia** signed agreements with **Summit Broadband** (Florida), **D&P Communications** (Michigan) and **Blue Valley Technologies** (Kansas). The company now represents 83 service providers across 72 DMAs in 27 states. Viamedia will handle ad sales for the three newly added providers, including both regional and national sales.

CARRIAGE

Newsmax is being rolled out on **DirecTV**’s Latin America streaming and live TV platform **DGO**. DGO is now available at no added cost to DirecTV customers in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Uruguay, and non-DirecTV customers can get in on DGO via paid plans. Newsmax uses AI-powered dubbing and subtitles to help localize content. – **Philo** is joining the holiday train after adding

Hallmark+ as an add-on for \$8 per month. The option joins other holiday streaming collections from **Lifetime**, **UPtv**, **Great American Family** and **Philo’s Christmas Plus Channel**.

RATINGS

The second annual Black Friday NFL game on **Prime Video** between the Chiefs and Raiders recorded 13.51 million viewers. That’s up 41% compared to last season’s Black Friday game between the Dolphins and Jets (9.61 million). Chiefs-Raiders viewership peaked at 17.43 viewers in the 6-6:15pm frame. It also posted 2.53 million viewers in the P18-34 demo and 5.72 million among P18-49. – The new espionage thriller “The Agency” became the most-streamed new series in **Showtime** history with 5.1 million global cross-platform viewers. The show is here to stay as it was renewed for a second season shortly after its debut Nov. 29 on **Paramount+** for Paramount+ with Showtime subscribers. – **ESPN** had its most-watched women’s college volleyball regular season. Matches averaged 140,000 viewers for the season, up 21% compared to the 2023 average. Approximately 635 million minutes were consumed—also a record—and viewership increased YOY among women by 20%, P18-24 by 70% and P2-17 by 90%.

XFINITY MOBILE HOLIDAY DEAL

Comcast is getting Xfinity Mobile customers in the holiday spirit. The company is rolling out a deal for new customers, allowing them to get up to \$500 to pay off their mobile device. Through Jan. 16, Xfinity Mobile and **Comcast Business** Mobile customers can activate a new line and get up to \$830 off a flagship **Apple**, **Samsung**, **Google** or **Motorola** phone with an eligible trade-in. New customers can also get up to \$500 to pay off their device, and existing customers can get up to \$700 toward a flagship Samsung phone with eligible trade-in. For new NOW Mobile customers, they’ll get a Motorola moto g 5G at no cost. Additionally, Xfinity Mobile and Comcast Business Mobile customers can utilize the WiFi Boost feature that offers speeds of up to 1 Gbps on Xfinity WiFi hotspots across the U.S.

PEOPLE

Nielsen’s content solutions business arm Gracenote named **Bill Michels** its Chief Product Officer. He’ll head up Gracenote’s global product team and help the company grow its portfolio of video, sports and music products while accelerating market expansion initiatives. Michels has been involved in product management, engineering and data partnerships for two decades, having held senior leadership roles at companies like **The Trade Desk**, **Four-square/Factual** and **Yahoo**. – **FiberLight** appointed **Shane Ward** as CFO and **Chuck Girt** as CTO. Ward was most recently CFO at **Lumos Fiber** and will help manage FiberLight’s financial strategies including M&A initiatives. Girt, who comes from **Everstream Solutions**, will be tasked with installing a future-ready infrastructure and helping standardize network designs and constructing systems.

Think about that for a minute...

Dominoes

Commentary by Steve Effros

Well, one thing's for sure; we're in for a fascinating, and likely bumpy ride when the new federal administration takes charge of telecommunications regulation. Whether it's at the FCC, where Commissioner Brendan Carr is likely to be Chairman, or at the various other venues that hold some sway over telecom policy, from the White House to the Department of Justice, the FTC, or the Commerce Department, things are going to change.

However, I would advise against making too many assumptions as to what's going to happen, when. The thing is, there are a lot of different rules, policies and ideas floating around right now, and they are all sort of like dominoes. The popular wisdom seems to be that a new "conservative" approach to government will not only take hold, but will "bulldoze" a lot of regulations, and do so quickly. As I said in my last column, "not so fast."

To be sure, there will be a bunch of "pending" regulations proposed by the current FCC Chair which will be scrapped. I've already listed many of those, from net neutrality to bulk billing to incredibly detailed customer service rules. The interesting thing about most of those is that they were already likely targets of legal challenges suggesting that they were far afield from the specific, Congressionally mandated statutory powers granted to the Commission. We're in a new era, one defined by a Supreme Court that has already decided to significantly neuter the "ancillary" powers of federal agencies. The new "major questions doctrine" throws lots of issues back to Congress instead of letting the agencies decide based on the discarded "Chevron Doctrine," which gave deference to the agency interpretations of its own powers, and is now the law of the land.

The thing is, that new legal landscape hasn't really been planted yet. We don't know how far the Supreme Court, or the lower courts trying to interpret what the Supremes were saying, will go. But one thing is for sure; they're not going to give more power to the bureaucrats, only less. And that's going to make it very hard to guess which way the dominoes will fall.

As noted, the regulations "in process" will probably all be scrapped. That's part of a conservative agenda that Carr has articulated throughout his current tenure in the minority. But, for instance, he is now suggesting that his Commission bureaucrats look at broadcast license renewals through a new lens, one that includes consideration of the accuracy of reporting by licensees. That's something that would never have been considered in the past. It's also something that would be very hard to suggest was intended by the current FCC statute.

So while the "dominoes" may fall in one direction when it comes to some existing or proposed rules, they have an equal chance of falling in the opposite direction when it comes to some of the "new" stuff that is being suggested by a new conservative majority. The exact same logic now being imposed by the Supreme Court's new restrictions on administrative overreach in the current administration presumably also applies to the new administration. It would be very hard for the Supremes to do a "180" on something as fundamental as the "major questions doctrine" in a matter of a few years because the "new" broad, non-statutory language-based regulations are more to their personal liking than the old ones. Although, with this court, which does not seem to be constrained by "precedent," you never know!

So my take on all of this is that it's unlikely we will see a "clean" fall of the dominoes on the table in one direction or the other when they start colliding with each other. In fact, I suspect that the "table" will get knocked and they'll go all over the place!



Steve

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(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.)

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