

# Cablefax Daily™


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What the Industry Reads First

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## Networks & Nerds: How Comic-Con Became TV's Hottest Summer Destination

Every summer, the San Diego Convention Center is transformed into a fan's paradise as **San Diego Comic-Con** comes to life. TV networks have increasingly taken an interest in the gathering, and have begun to flood the show floor with booths, panels and fan events themed around their most popular franchises. This year is no different, with an exhibitor list featuring all the major networks from **Fox** and **CBS** to **Netflix** and **HBO**. Routinely drawing a crowd of more than 135K, San Diego Comic-Con has very quickly shifted into a TV-centric convention as more networks have discovered the unique value of attending a fan gathering of this size. "TV tends to be a one-way medium, where you're just consuming the show," *Oswald Mendez*, *svp* of marketing at **BBC America**, said. "This gives us an opportunity to have a live connection with our fans." BBC America was one of the first to embrace fan engagement at Comic-Con. Mendez called the in-person interaction with the fan base "critical" to the network, which has had a tremendous presence at the conference since the first slate of TV shows were introduced to the venue's coveted Hall H six years ago. "We don't see it as work, we see it as a labor of love," Mendez remarked. "Because they're so passionate, it's contagious." Creating a space for those fans to express that passion has been a top priority for the network. On Saturday (7/22), BBCA will host its first-ever "Doctor Who" Cosplay Show at Omnia Nightclub, where fans will showcase their handmade creations outside of the show's Hall H panel on Sunday. **Movie Pilot** will be streaming live coverage of the event on the Super News Live Facebook page. These offsite fan events offer another opportunity to foster the connection between networks and viewers, especially for those unable to purchase a convention pass. **FX** has been going beyond the show floor since 2016 with their "FXHIBITION," featuring attractions themed around hit shows "American Horror Story," "Legion" and "Atlanta." "What happens at the convention center is a huge draw, but passes are so limited," noted *Kenya Hardaway*, head of integrated marketing at FX. "Activating outside of the convention center gives us the opportunity to engage fans who still want to go and experience the excitement that Comic-Con brings to San Diego." That fan engagement has proven invaluable to the network, according to Hardaway, and can't be achieved at other major conventions throughout the year. It's what differentiates Comic-Con from the rest of the pack, and why it's become the hot destination for the biggest shows. "We try to take advantage



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of that [unique opportunity] to actively listen to what they say and use that information to make sure that our future activations and programming are reflective of that feedback,” Hardaway said. Returning network **MTV** has taken the idea of a fan gathering to the next level by taking over Petco Park for the last four years with its “MTV Fandom Fest,” a celebration featuring live music and fan-focused activations, but other companies are not shying away from taking a leap into the activation space. This year, Netflix is creating “The Netflix Experience” at the nearby Hilton Gaslamp, featuring recreations of scenes from David Ayer’s “Bright” and the most popular locations from “Stranger Things.” Visitors will be able to stop by a memorial to Barb before entering a VR experience placing fans inside the show’s infamous “Upside Down.”

**Not Sinclair-Tribune Fans:** Add **Newsmax** to the list of companies opposed to **Sinclair’s** proposed \$3.9bn **Tribune** merger. For what it’s worth, Newsmax founder and CEO *Chris Ruddy* is close to President *Trump*. The news website and TV channel filed comments Friday at the **FCC** supporting **DISH, ACA and Public Knowledge’s request that the broadcasters turn over more info** in support of their combination. “Press freedom and media diversity may be seriously harmed by this transaction and other transactions that may result from this precedent, further limiting press freedom and media diversity,” Newsmax said in its comments. Independent networks **Cinemoi, MavTV, One America News Network** and **Ride TV** also filed comments supporting the request for more info and additional time in the review cycle. “The information provided by the applicants is insufficient to evaluate the purported public interest benefits and weigh them against the resulting harms,” the nets wrote.

**2Q Ad Spending:** All that news net viewing is helping the national TV ad market avoid negative numbers. The latest data from **Standard Media Index** shows that while total ad market spending closed 2Q up 3.8%, the national TV market was flat compared to 2Q16. Digital ended the quarter up 11%. National TV would have fared worse if it wasn’t for news, which was +16% across both cable and broadcast compared to the same period last year. Sports saw an 8% decline in spending, while entertainment was flat. Among cable newsmen, Fox News saw an 11% spending increase, while MSNBC was up a whopping 40% and CNN climbed 21%, according to SMI. The three big broadcasters were up 18%. “Tucker Carlson Tonight” on Fox News received the highest average unit cost across all cable news shows at \$13,779, up +13% compared to “The O’Reilly Factor’s” unit cost in Q2 2016, SMI said. In TV spending overall, broadcast fared better than cable, posting a 4% increase for the period vs cable’s 4% decline. SMI chalked up the difference primarily to CBS carrying the final three games of the NCAA tournament this year instead of TBS.

**Esports Deal:** **Eleven Sports** reached a deal with **Gfinity** to bring the video gaming Elite Series to all of its markets, including its newly launched US channel (formerly One World Sports). Eight professional teams, including one from the US, compete across three games—Street Fighter V, Counterstrike: GO and Rocket League. In this series, each team drafts top amateur talent into their roster.

**People:** Former **Ericsson** exec *Manish Jindal* was named group, vp of wireless for **Charter**. *FierceCable* first reported the news, noting the exec’s position on his LinkedIn profile. -- **605** CEO and former **Cablevision** COO *Kristin Dolan* was named to the board of fast food chain **Wendy’s**. The board was expanded to 12 members from 11, with Dolan’s appointment effective immediately.

**Kaitz Dinner:** **HBO** and **Girls Who Code** will be honored at the 34th annual **Walter Kaitz Foundation Fundraising Dinner**, set for Sept 27 at the Marriott Marquis in NYC. Each year, the event raises more than \$1mln in support of **Emma Bowen, NAMIC** and **WICT** initiatives. HBO will receive the Diversity Champion award for serving as a role model to the industry. Girls Who Code, a group committed to closing the gender gap in tech, will get the Diversity Advocate award, presented to an individual or organization outside of the cable industry that has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to diversity.

**Giving Back:** **Shentel** employees set a record by donating three tons of food through the company’s fourth annual Summer Backpack Program. The program supports regional food banks and area food pantries in Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland as they provide food for children in need of lunches in the summer months.

**Oops!:** We incorrectly reported the timeslot for “In Living Color” on **Aspire** after it debuts on the net with a Labor Day marathon. The show will air regularly from 6-8pm ET, with “The Hughleys” then moving from 4-6pm ET.