

**DIVERSITY WEEK DAY 2**

# Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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## **WICT Forum: Honorees Grateful for Cable's Inclusivity, Call for More Progress**

The opening of day of **WICT's** annual Leadership Conference served as an opportunity to recognize how enthusiastically the cable industry has embraced equality of opportunity, but also that there's still room to grow. Speeches from the first-ever co-Woman of the Year honorees during the Touchstones Luncheon Monday eloquently captured the dichotomous sentiment. **BBC America** pres/gm *Sarah Barnett*, who had a tough act to follow in the form of her hilarious "Planet Earth"-themed intro video (fittingly titled "Barnett Earth") focused on the chief executive positions that even today elude women. Lightheartedly referring to the struggle as the "pursuit of the ultimate pantsuit," Barnett astutely pointed out that the qualities that make a great leader—decisiveness, competitiveness, toughness and holding employees to a high standard—all run counter to what we have been socialized to expect from women. As a result, she said, women in power are rarely well-liked. In the wake of another week of harsh rhetoric from President Trump, she proclaimed that Election Day 2016 was "just another Tuesday in America" in the sense that a woman lost a job to a less qualified man. On a more hopeful note, she said there are "cracks in the edifice of prejudice" and that women must support each other. Co-honoree *D'Arcy Rudnay*, **Comcast** evp and chief communications officer, painted her employer as a model of diversity and contrasted Comcast's inclusivity with some of the horror stories coming out of Silicon Valley. She joked that for Comcast svp and chief diversity officer *David Cohen*, "diversity is hiring a man." Cohen in his opening remarks announced that 10 of his 15 direct reports are female. Comcast CEO *Brian Roberts*, who introduced Rudnay, called her hiring 15 years ago "one of the best things to ever happen to the company." The three Woman to Watch honorees also struck a balance between commending the industry and calling for a continued push forward. **Charter** avp, field operations for Western NC *Charlene Keys* beamed about "being a leader in an industry dedicated to diversity," contrasting the opportunities she has had as a woman of color with those of her late mother. **Cisco** director of media operations *Samira Panah Bakhitar* opened up about her early-career struggles overcoming self-doubt and critics in the workplace. She paid tribute to those who encouraged her, noting the best mentors "are the ones who don't realize they're mentoring." Tina Thornton, **ESPN** svp, production and multimedia sponsorship integration and management operations, coached women on the importance of a strong, diverse personal support system for success. "Who's



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in your circle,” she asked, prompting audience members to evaluate who they surround themselves with.

**Cable Modem Class Action:** Time Warner Cable (now owned by Charter) and plaintiffs in a proposed class action suit alleging the MSO improperly added a cable modem fee have asked a federal court in NY to dismiss the case. The filing did not stipulate why. Charter declined to comment and *Steven Wittels*, lead attorney for plaintiffs, did not return requests for comment. The initial complaint was filed in 2013 by nine plaintiffs and related to a \$3.95/month lease fee instituted in Oct 2012. An amended complaint in February of 2017 said that TWC has consistently raised the price of the lease fee, increasing it to \$5.99 in mid-2013 and to \$10/month in 2016. Charter acquired TWC in May 2016. Charter does not charge a modem lease fee, but customers on legacy TWC and Bright House contracts still have those fees for the duration of those promotions.

**Big NCTA Departures:** Two names synonymous with NCTA for decades are retiring this fall. *Jadz Janucik*, association affairs svp, will depart Oct 13 after 41 years with the trade group. She'll be followed a few weeks later by industry affairs svp *Barbara York*, who has been at the org for 36 years—with 35 of those spent spearheading NCTA's trade show. The association opted this year to end that show after 65 years. Janucik has led NCTA teams organizing grassroots activities to support federal initiatives, tracking telecommunications policy at the state level, and collaborating with regional and state cable trade associations that support the industry.

**More FX+:** Commercial-free streaming service FX+ has added more FX originals and struck a deal with **Cox Communications**. The service added 15 additional FX original series, including “The Americans” and “Atlanta.” That brings it to a total of 31 FX series, both current and legacy. It launched this month with Comcast on board as the first distributor. Cox subs will have access to the \$5.99/month FX+ early next month. At TCA in August, FX Networks CEO *John Landgraf* said the service wouldn't “yet” result in less FX content on **Hulu**. Adding some of these series, such as “Atlanta,” meant renegotiating an output deal with Hulu, which **21st Century Fox**, is a part owner in, *Variety* reported.

**Paramount Debut:** **Viacom** announced **Spike** will make the flip to **Paramount Network** at 9pm on Jan 18 with a live one-hour ep of “Lip Sync Battle.” The rebrand is part of CEO **Bob Bakish's** strategy to devote the bulk of resources to six flagship channels—**Paramount, MTV, Comedy Central, BET, Nick and Nick Jr.** Several originals already have been announced for Paramount, including six-part miniseries “WACO” and dark comedy “Heathers,” based on the 1988 cult classic film. Get a jump on the new look with the launch of [ParamountNetwork.com](http://ParamountNetwork.com) and @ParamountNet on **Twitter**.

**Generation Gap:** Within a number of years, the makeup of corporate workplaces will likely span four generations, from Baby Boomers to Generation Z. During a panel on thriving in a multigenerational environment at the **WICT Leadership Conference** Monday, panelists discussed the importance of looking past commonly held stereotypes of each group. Millennials, of course, are an easy target given their reputation for being self-serving job hoppers. **Cisco** director of media operations *Samira Panah Bakhitar* said her experience is that millennials are willing to stay with one company if that organization fosters an environment in which they feel as if they're part of something bigger. She noted Cisco uses a program called StandOut that identifies employees' strengths for managers and lets employees give weekly feedback on their work experience. **Turner** director of organization development, diversity and inclusion *Danette Johnson* said companies that pass over millennials out of fear that they'll quickly move on are putting their organization at risk. She echoed Panah's assertion that millennials will stay given the right corporate culture. Moderator *Jennifer Deal*, a senior research scientist at the **Center for Creative Leadership**, noted that while millennials are often criticized for being too dependent on constant praise, in reality, everyone wants feedback on their work. Regarding the impending influx of Generation Z into the workforce, Johnson said Turner is looking at “blowing up” job requirements as we currently know them. She questioned concepts like years of experience and even the requirement of a four-year degree.

**More Fox for Hulu:** Hulu lit up eight new **Fox** affiliates for its live TV service, including **Nexstar's WJKT** in Jackson, TN, and **Mission Broadcasting's WFXP** in Erie, PA. The service now has 61 Fox affiliates live and 262 affiliates in total.

**Star Power:** Iconic newscaster *Katie Couric* and director/producer/actress *Trudie Styler* brought the star power on Day One of WICT's conference. In her keynote sitdown with *USA Today* editor-in-chief *Joanne Lipman*, Couric chronicled her history overcoming those critical of her as a female reporter and anchor and encouraged women to adopt be unabashed in their support of continued female progress. “I think there's nothing wrong with the ‘F’ word,” she said, re-

ferring, of course, to “feminism.” She closed by urging women that it is time to celebrate each others’ successes despite the competitive nature of business. During her own keynote at the Touchstones Luncheon, Styler reflected on how the hospitality and generosity of a stranger helped her begin her adult life on the right foot. Without that support, she said, she would have likely ended up working in a paintbrush factory as her father insisted. She encouraged female leaders to similarly take young women under their wing. Styler, perhaps known best as the wife of rock star *Sting*, also touched on being labeled as such and the sacrifices she made putting her early career on pause to start a family. She realized, however, that the mostly female audience might not be sympathetic. “Sting’s wife, poor me, right?” she quipped.

**NFL Ratings:** With weekend NFL ratings mixed, eyes now turn to ESPN’s Cowboys-Cardinals MNF match-up to see if the National Anthem controversy has any impact on viewership. CBS’ double-header Sunday was up 4%, while NBC was down 10% and Fox -16%. Mark Cuban on CNBC’s “Squawk on the Street” Monday repeated the idea that it’s hard to connect one issue to ratings, and suggested that the bigger issue remains the alternative ways of viewing content today. “I think the NBA and the NFL, the NHL and Major League Baseball, we all need to start advertising the fact that watching a game on television is the best viewing experience,” he said, referring to problems with buffering or screen size that can impact watching a game. “Ratings are going to be down, but they’re still better than what other shows are experiencing.” Mavericks owner Cuban, critical of Donald Trump during the election, also questioned why the president weighed in on the matter. “Just because you have a Twitter account doesn’t mean you have to use it,” he said.

**Box-Free on LG:** Comcast subs won’t need a set-top to get the X1 platform if they have an LG 4K Ultra HD Smart TV. LG Electronics USA signed on as an Xfinity TV partner on 2017 and 2018 LG webOS Smart TVs. Comcast expects to launch a beta of the Xfinity TV Partner app on LG Smart TVs, starting with 2017 models, early next year.

**Programming:** With Milo Yiannopoulos’ “Free Speech Week” at UC Berkeley canceled, One America News Now said it would premiere an Antifa doc that was scheduled to debut on campus Monday night. “America Under Siege: Antifa” will premiere on the net Tues at 10:30pm ET, with a sneak preview at 10:30am. The net, available on DirecTV, Verizon FiOS and others, also said it’s offering to extend airtime to any speaker who was scheduled to speak during Free Speech Week.

**Helping Hands:** Media execs have stepped up to aid in support efforts for Puerto Rico after the destruction of Hurricane Maria. “Operation Puerto Rico Care-Lift,” a collaboration between Discovery’s Lara Richardson and 2C Creative’s Chris Sloan and Carla Kaufman Sloan already has generated more than \$30K for sending supplies and eventually a team to the island. The group has launched a GoFundMe page for the cause and is collecting donations at 2C’s Miami headquarters. The deadline for donations is Thursday to prepare them for next-day departure to Puerto Rico. Others wishing to support the cause can donate to the GoFundMe page, bring supplies to 2C or send supplies to via an e-retailer (the team has established a pre-set Amazon Wishlist). -- Univision’s “Unidos por los Nuestrós” (United for Each Other) live broadcast on Saturday allowed the American Red Cross to raise more than \$3mln for those affected by the Mexican earthquakes and Hurricanes Maria, Irma and Harvey.

# Cablefax Awards Gala

November 7  
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## An Underdog with Upside

**FuboTV** is an underdog in the virtual MVPD market for a number of reasons; let's start with two. First, there's the obvious reality of competing with services backed by established pay-TV providers (**Dish's Sling TV** and **DirecTV Now**) and digital powerhouses (**YouTube TV** and **Hulu**). Second, and perhaps more crucial, is the fact that its target audience—sports fans—has proven to be among the most reluctant to cut the cord in the early days of streaming TV.

"That has been a big part of the problem we're trying to address," Fubo CMO/co-founder *Alberto Horiuela* told **Cablefax's** Screenster. "As a sports fan, up until recently, it was extremely difficult to cut the cord and keep your sports. ... When you look at the rest of the market, frankly, if you want to get as much sports as you do right now on cable, you might end up paying as much, if not more than what you're paying right now on cable."

Convincing sports fans that FuboTV is a viable fill-in for cable is a challenge that Fubo's marketing department, led by Horiuela and newly hired vp, head of North American marketing *Yale Wang*, hope their first TV ad campaign will help address. The effort, which launched at the start of the **NFL** season and is slated to run through Week 6, stars actor *Michael Varamogiannis* as spokesperson Fubo Chavez, a diehard European soccer fan adapting to the culture of American football.

Wang said Chavez and his "edgy" antics are endearing to the young male audience (18-34) that Fubo is trying to attract in the early going.

"We wanted a message that would cut through the noise and precisely position us, and we felt the best way to do that was through a mascot or spokesperson, if you will, who was basically the world's biggest sports fan," Wang said. "It's really a nice way to introduce the brand to those who might not have known us."

The campaign corresponds with a promotion offering the

first two months of service for \$19.99 each before reverting to the regular price of \$34.99/month. Like everyone in the skinny bundle market, Fubo is constantly performing the balancing act of offering the most compelling channel lineup at a price that is appealing enough for customers to take a leap of faith, but that also works financially.

Sports channels make up more than half of Fubo's 65-channel lineup, including many nets that are part of premium sports tiers on traditional cable systems. Fubo also offers **CBS**, **NBC** and **Fox** for nationally broadcast games and Fox- and NBC-owned RSNs in many markets, allowing fans to watch their local teams. There is one fairly significant outlier, however, that will likely alienate some fans: **ESPN**.

As cable operators know well, ESPN's flagship station alone can change the economics of a bundle with its reported \$8 price tag (Fubo declined to comment on whether it pays similar rates to MVPDs). Still, Horiuela acknowledged the importance of adding ESPN and is hopeful that it could happen.

"We would love to have ESPN on the platform and, in fact, we have had many conversations and are still in the process of speaking with Disney, so there could be a horizon where ESPN is part of the bundle," he said. "It's really just a function of making sure that we have the right package where the economics make sense for the consumer."

Facing hefty competition, skepticism from sports fans toward cord-cutting and an inherent focus on the most expensive programming on the market, Fubo has its fair share of obstacles to overcome. If it's successful in raising brand awareness and adding ESPN while keeping its bundle affordable, however, it could very well shake sports fans' loyalty to the almighty pay-TV bundle and become a go-to for millennial sports fans.

-Alex Silverman

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