

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Effective Competition: NCTA Puts Forth Proposal for Simplifying Rate Regs

With the FCC embarking on a media modernization initiative under chmn *Ajit Pai*, cable's largest lobbying group is suggesting the agency reconsider the cable rate regulation process. It's a system that saw a seismic shift when the FCC passed an order in 2015 that stopped local franchise authorities from regulating basic cable rates and equipment charges unless they can show proof that the cable operator doesn't face effective competition in their jurisdiction. Before that, the operator had the burden of proving effective competition—defined as MVPD competitors having at least 15% of the local pay-TV market. Now NCTA is suggesting the FCC go even further by deeming an operator's rates reasonable if they don't exceed the standard service and equipment rates operators charge for comparable offerings in communities subject to effective competition. "The existing regime is based on a complex, cumulative calculation starting with 1993 service and equipment rates and including a series of incremental adjustments for subsequent changes in channels, external costs, and rates, with projections and true-ups, as well as burdensome annual calculations of capital costs and operating expenses," NCTA said in its proposal. Under the current system, the FCC Media Bureau releases quarterly inflation adjustment figures for the small number of operators who don't face effective competition four times a year. The most recent release came Tuesday, with the Bureau putting the inflation factor for those operators for 1Q18 at 2.2%. The inflation adjustment factor is calculated by dividing the GNP-PI for the first quarter of 2018 (114.988) by the GNP-PI for the fourth quarter of 2017 (114.363). NCTA is calling for an "Updated Comparative Benchmark," proposing operators be allowed to calculate UCB rates based on reasonable system sampling, with the calculation to be made at least annually. "It would provide a built-in incentive for operators to offer competitive prices to all subscribers, even in markets without 'effective competition,'" NCTA said in its filing. "With respect to operator benefits, this approach would facilitate more efficient region-wide and company-wide marketing, without the need for special rate adjustments for the remaining handful of regulated communities."

Meet the White House's New Communications Exec: Actually, there's a good chance you already have given his 22 years in the industry. The reports proved true with President *Trump* on Thursday appointing former **Fox News** co-



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pres **Bill Shine** as deputy chief of staff for communications and assistant to the president. Shine, who just celebrated his birthday on the Fourth of July, managed programming and news functions at Fox News. After some 20 years at the net, he exited last year following questions over his handling of sexual harassment complaints at the network. Shine was named to the **Cablefax** 100 in 2017 along with co-pres **Jack Abernethy**. Maybe his answers to the infamous 100 questionnaire shed some light on his management style? He told us the top three qualities he looks for in a hire are “inquisitiveness, an open mind and someone who likes to learn.”

CEO for Hire: **TiVo** shares closed down nearly 4% Thursday following the news that pres/CEO **Enrique Rodriguez** has left to become CTO at **Liberty Global** in Europe. His departure comes after less than a year at the company, having been named to the role in November. Rodriguez has served as evp, CTO for **AT&T's** Entertainment Group and held positions with **Cisco** and **Microsoft**. **Raghu Rau**, a member of TiVo's board since 2015, was named interim pres/CEO. The board has begun a search for candidates to take on the role permanently. The shakeup comes as TiVo continues to explore a broad range of strategic alternatives to maximize company value, including going private and merging with leading players. TiVo expects to provide an update on this review during 2Q earnings. Rodriguez came on board following the retirement of **Thomas Carson**, who was with Rovi/TiVo for more than 11 years. At the time of Rovi's acquisition of TiVo, **Naveen Chopra** was interim CEO, leaving after the deal was complete. Chopra is currently CFO at music service **Pandora**.

On the Rise: Up-and-coming **Facebook** rival **MeWe** conquered another step in its rise to mainstream popularity, completing a \$5.2mln Series A financing. The investment brings MeWe's total funding to \$10mln to support the engineering of the platform and its enterprise version MeWePRO. Most of the company's backing has come from individuals, including Lynda.com founder **Lynda Weinman**, author **Marci Shimoff**, **Rachel Roy** and **Jack Canfield**. The platform promotes total user control over their content and data, a sore spot for Facebook in recent months, along with complete viewability of every post, chat and comment in one timeline with no interference from ads. It calls itself “free forever,” running on a freemium revenue model while also generating revenue from MeWePRO.

Changes at Cable ONE: **Cable ONE's** board of directors named **Steve Cochran** as the company's next svp and CFO. He'll take on his svp duties on August 6 before succeeding retiring CFO **Kevin Coyle** on August 13. Coyle will stay on as a svp until early January, acting in an advisory role and ensuring a smooth transition. Cochran spent 15 years at **WOW!**, most recently as CEO. “His extensive financial, operational and strategic expertise in the cable

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industry will serve Cable ONE and our stakeholders well. This deep understanding of our holistic business and his competitive experience will allow him to play a key role in driving our long-term success,” Cable ONE CEO Julia Laulis said in a statement.

Ratings: ESPN said its audience continued to grow in the second quarter, with a 10% rise in primetime while all key male and adult demos grew 6-12%. The primetime growth was in large part due to the **NBA Playoffs**, which averaged 5.144mln viewers (+30% from 2017). The network averaged 1.544mln viewers overall compared to 1.405mln last year, according to **Nielsen**. Although average viewership escalated, the networks audience only rose to 607K (from 604K in 2017). -- Viewers tuned in to **Logo’s** “Trailblazer Honors” with this year’s program growing 80% in total viewers and 118% with P18-49. The one-hour special, which aired on June 23 at 9pm on Logo and VH1, delivered 328K total viewers and 203K P18-49 across the two networks.

Be Kind: TLC is accepting entries for its second annual “Give a Little TLC” contest. The campaign raises awareness about bullying prevention while encouraging and empowering people to perform small acts of kindness in their communities. Anyone older than 18 can nominate another person older than 13 by submitting an essay describing how that person shows their dedication to inspiring others in their communities to fight bullying. Winners receive a \$5K donation to the bullying prevention program of their choice.

Phone Expansion: Cable One Business’s recently introduced its new phone service, which incorporates cloud-based virtual **PBX technology**. It’s currently available in eight markets across seven states, including Anniston, AL; Prescott, AZ; Boise, ID; Nampa, ID; Grenada, MS; Fargo, ND; Duncan, OK; and Sherman, TX. Hosted Voice allows customers to mix and match voice “seats” with optional features and devices for more customized solutions. Pricing starts at \$19.99/month for a seat with basic calling features and unlimited long-distance when bundled with a business internet plan for 36 months. Cable One Business plans to bring the service to the majority of its markets by the end of the year.

Superfans Unite: WarnerMedia is digging into fan service ahead of **San Diego Comic-Con** by preparing for the launch of digital subscription service **DC Universe**. The membership allows fans to access original live-action and animated series, classic TV series and films, a selection of digital comic books, breaking news, a DC-centric encyclopedia and exclusive merchandise. The service also allows DC fans to connect. Fans can sign up now for an opportunity to get into the beta, which will open in August before the service’s official launch later this fall. -- **AMC Network** is going all-out for San Diego Comic-Con, having a significant presence beyond its panels with cast and crew. Fans of “The Walking Dead” and “Fear the Walking Dead” can visit the “Dead Quarters,” an immersive experience with a curated walk through settings from both series with a 22-foot zombie slide. There will also be a booth activation for “The Walking Dead: Our World,” its location-based augmented reality mobile game launching on July 12. Attendees will be able to play and fight walkers with characters from the series. They’ll also be able to play an exclusive Comic-Con encounter that offers guaranteed rare or epic characters from the series to add to their in-game collection.

Programming: MTV’s “Catfish: Trolls” is set to premiere on July 18 at 10pm. The event, lasting three weeks, will investigate the phenomenon of internet trolling by allowing victims to confront their aggressors. -- **Nickelodeon** greenlit 20 episodes of “Los Casagrandes” (working title), a spinoff of “The Loud House.” The spinoff news comes following the premiere of new eps of The Loud House, which ranked as the number one show across TV with Kids 2-11 and Kids 6-11.

People: fuboTV brought on *Geir Magnusson Jr.* to serve as its chief technology officer. The **AppNexus** veteran, who co-founded **Sourcepoint Technologies** in 2015, will double the company’s engineering team over the next few months.

Honors: Carnegie Corp of NY named **Mediacom** founder and CEO *Rocco Commisso* to its annual list of Great Immigrants. Other 2018 honorees include **Uber** CEO *Dara Khosrowshahi* and singer/songwriter *Regina Spektor*. “Every Fourth of July since 2006, the Corporation has sponsored the public awareness initiative to commemorate the legacy of our founder, Scottish immigrant Andrew Carnegie, who believed strongly in both immigration and citizenship,” the Carnegie Corp said.

Les Read Arrangements: A service for *Les Read* has been scheduled for July 14 at 1:30pm at St. Stephens Episcopal Church in Port Washington, NY. [Read passed away](#) June 28, a few weeks after experiencing a cardiac condition. Read spent decades at **HBO** and **TelePrompTer**, served as **The Cable Center’s** ambassador and led the **Cable Television Pioneers** for two decades.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Raw Wounds

While *Gillian Flynn* may be best known for her twisted novel “Gone Girl,” her first book “Sharp Objects” is actually more disturbing. **HBO** bravely takes it to the small screen with an eight episode limited series directed by *Jean Marc Vallée* (“Big Little Lies,” “Dallas Buyers Club”). Those who loved the premium net’s adaptation of Moriarty’s novel “Big Little Lies” shouldn’t jump into the Flynn series expecting similar storytelling despite Vallée’s attachment. Yes, both have some mystery and a strong female cast, but Sharp Objects doesn’t have the levity that Moriarty intermixed with heavy subjects. Sharp Objects is more in line with “True Detective,” with Flynn penning a dark tale that actually made me feel physically uncomfortable at times. Creator and showrunner *Marti Noxon* (“Dietland”), who worked with Flynn on the scripts, keeps the disconcerting atmosphere alive. The first episode helps set that mood—something is unsettling, but you can’t put your finger on what exactly. Whatever has happened, it seems to have left Camille Preaker (*Amy Adams*) tormented. Adams gives a masterful performance as a damaged reporter and a cutter. Her editor (*Miguel Sandoval*) has been sent to cover the story of two missing teen girls in her hometown of Wind Gap, Missouri. An aside: Maybe it’s the fact I grew up in Georgia, maybe it’s because so many shows are filmed there, but I didn’t even have to consult Google to recognize that Wind Gap was actually filmed in the Peach State. It’s actually the town of Barnesville, highly recognizable by the murals downtown. With Sharp Object’s story unfurling over eight hours, the adaptation is a slow build. It isn’t even until the last 10 minutes of Episode 1 that the viewer even realizes Camille has a half-sister (*Eliza Scanlen*), who is the same age as the slain girls. As with most Southern Gothics, this is a story more about characters than suspense. Sharp Object’s sadness can be overpowering at times, but the story cuts deep with hauntingly beautiful acting and imagery. — *Amy Maclean*

Reviews: “The Incredible Dr. Pol,” Season 13 premiere, 9pm, Saturday, **Nat Geo WILD**. Is this Dutch-born veterinarian the epitome of reality TV? In other words, is septuagenarian *Dr. Jan Pol* as he appears to be on his series? We think so, though we’ll guess he’d avoid “incredible” as his descriptor. “Warmly ornery and businesslike” might be his choices. Pol could use “incredible” to describe the series, which has amassed 100+ episodes. For networks in 80mln HHs or fewer, it was the #1 unscripted and #6 series overall in 2017, WILD says. As he begins lucky Season 13, Pol’s all business until a dachshund pup in shock arrives. Pol begins melting. When the workday’s over Pol sneaks a peek at the dog, whose condition remains dubious, but who’s won over his doctor. Whether treating a kitten or a steer (you’ll see both in this ep), Pol’s secret is out—when it comes to animals, the sometimes-gruff Pol’s a softie. That’s the reality. -- “ATL Homicide,” series premiere, 10pm, Monday, **TV One**. If viewers seek a good story well told they could do worse than tuning in to this new TV One series featuring tales from a duo of retired Atlanta detectives. This delicious opening story about the murder of a single mother has multiple suspects and little is as it seems. — *Seth Arenstein*

| Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings* (6/25/18-7/1/18) | | |
|---|-----------------|----------------------|
| Mon-Sun | MC US AA% | MC US AA (000) |
| FNC | 0.855 | 2602 |
| MSNBC | 0.494 | 1503 |
| HGTV | 0.473 | 1440 |
| USA | 0.417 | 1271 |
| TBSC | 0.364 | 1110 |
| DISC | 0.334 | 1018 |
| ESPN | 0.322 | 982 |
| ID | 0.320 | 975 |
| HIST | 0.299 | 911 |
| FOOD | 0.297 | 906 |
| A&E | 0.295 | 899 |
| ADSM | 0.285 | 868 |
| NAN | 0.273 | 832 |
| TLC | 0.259 | 789 |
| HALL | 0.258 | 785 |
| CNN | 0.255 | 777 |
| TNT | 0.240 | 730 |
| DSNY | 0.225 | 685 |
| FX | 0.221 | 673 |
| HMM | 0.215 | 654 |
| CRN | 0.207 | 631 |
| TVLAND | 0.206 | 628 |
| DSJR | 0.200 | 608 |
| NICK | 0.187 | 569 |
| VH1 | 0.185 | 564 |
| INSP | 0.177 | 540 |
| LIFE | 0.174 | 530 |
| BRAVO | 0.167 | 507 |
| MTV | 0.165 | 504 |
| HBO | 0.165 | 503 |
| AMC | 0.164 | 500 |
| PARA | 0.163 | 497 |
| SYFY | 0.161 | 490 |
| BET | 0.159 | 485 |
| NKJR | 0.156 | 476 |
| NATGEO | 0.153 | 467 |
| APL | 0.151 | 461 |
| TRAVEL | 0.150 | 457 |
| FX | 0.147 | 447 |
| GSN | 0.146 | 446 |
| OWN | 0.127 | 385 |

*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.

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