

# Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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## Science!: Amazon, Netflix Mathematically March into Summer TCA

Silicon Valley looks at TV viewers a bit differently than traditional networks, and that perspective was on prominent display in Los Angeles as big content spenders **Amazon** and **Netflix** rolled into summer TCA. “Demographics are not a good indicator of what people like to watch,” *Cindy Holland*, Netflix vp, original programming, said during this summer’s tour. “Instead, our team of scientists have understood that there are connections between content types and what people like to watch. It can go several layers deeper than that.” That’s why Netflix now thinks in terms of “taste communities” rather than traditional demos, with Holland noting that people who like *Dave Chappelle* might also like “The Theory of Everything”—“there’s a lot of math that goes on to determine why that is.” Amazon TV co-head *Albert Cheng*, meanwhile, several times referenced Prime “customers” rather than “viewers.” Science, math... customers. Yes, things are getting geeky, but not every new idea takes off. Case in point: Amazon’s now abandoned experiment to rely on fan voting to determine which pilots go to series. It may have produced “The Man in the High Castle” and other early shows, but “it just took a little too long to get shows that customers wanted,” said Cheng, noting “this protracted time of getting the writers’ room ready and everything” after votes were tallied. Only five months on the job, Amazon Studios chief *Jennifer Salke* confirmed Amazon won’t return to pilot voting because “keeping the momentum of delivering on that, I think, hit a little bit of a skid there.” A dedication to data can also trump fan passion: For example, the recent cancellation of Netflix’s “Everything Sucks” despite a valiant but ultimately unsuccessful fan campaign to save it didn’t stem from a lack of viewership as much as data showing that too many people didn’t finish the entire season, Holland said. Shows now even use these unique data points to adjust content, with “Ozark” producer and star *Jason Bateman* telling reporters after his panel that he tracks what times of day and on what devices people are watching. “There are things that affect our creative process that are helpful,” he said, noting that his team sometimes modifies color contrast or sound mixing based on viewer habits. To be sure, traditional nets are tuning into new types of data as well. But the game will likely get even more intense as Netflix, Amazon and other new players cement their power. Perhaps *Michael Douglas*, who chatted with reporters after his panel for Netflix’s “The Kominsky Method,” said it best: “Silicon Valley has come down here to Hollywood like a tornado.” Yep.

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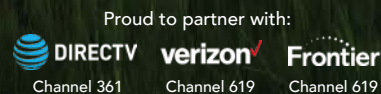
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**New CFO for Cox:** Former **Frontier** finance head *Perley McBride* was tapped as the new CFO for Cox Communications, **Cablefax** learned. He fills a role that was vacated in December when *Mark Bowser* moved over to **Cox Automotive**. *Sandy Mencher* had been filling the job on an interim basis. McBride joined Frontier in 2016, leaving this past June to return to Atlanta. His time at Frontier included raising \$1.6bln of new second lien debt and retiring about \$1.7bln of unsecured notes. His previous work experience includes **Cable & Wireless**, **Leap Wireless** and **The Weather Company**.

**Fighting Back:** It was only a matter of time. The **DOJ** filed an appellant brief Monday laying out its continued arguments against the **AT&T-Time Warner** merger. The brief says that while *Judge Richard Leon* gave the merger the green light, he only made the decision by “erroneously ignoring fundamental principles of economic and common sense” and that those errors distorted the court’s view of the evidence. The brief also states the district court significantly constrained the government’s presentation of evidence by not admitting documents such as AT&T’s own analyses of the potential competitive effects of vertical integration and examinations of the effects of blackouts. “The district court discounted much of the government’s evidence from the industry as colored by self-interest,” the document said, claiming that the government established a reasonable probability that the merger would increase Time Warner’s bargaining leverage and greatly reduce competition. “The district court’s contrary conclusion rests on two fundamental analytical errors: it discarded the economics of bargaining, and it failed to apply the foundational principle of corporate-wide profit maximization.” AT&T stood confidently by the district court’s decision. “Appeals aren’t ‘do-overs.’ After a long trial, Judge Leon weighed the evidence and rendered a comprehensive 172-page decision that systematically exposed each of the many holes in the Government’s case,” AT&T gen counsel *David McAtee* said. “There is nothing in DOJ’s brief today that should disturb that decision.”

**Spanish Shakeup:** It’s almost impossible to keep up with news coming out of the Spanish-language programmers these days. **Univision** on Monday announced the appointment of *Henry Ahn* as pres, content distribution and partnerships. Ahn served as the long-time senior distribution executive for **Scripps**, but did not keep his position after its merger with **Discovery**. Ahn also previously worked for **NBCU**, **HBO** and **Comedy Central**. Meanwhile, **Telemundo**, once far behind in ratings to Univision, has narrowed the gap considerably, particularly after obtaining the exclusive Spanish-language rights to the World Cup. The company had its own exec news on Monday, announcing the surprising departure of network pres *Luis Silberwasser* after four years. His reasons for leaving are currently unclear, but he will remain as pres through Oct 1 to help with the transition. Telemundo also announced promo-

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tions and added responsibilities of four of its major executives in the wake of Silberwasser's exit. *Beau Ferrari*, evp, oversees the operations, financial performance and corporate strategy. *Mónica Gil*, evp, has added the CMO title and will oversee the company's reputation, brand and corporate marketing in addition to communications, corporate affairs and HR. *Peter Blacker* takes on the newly created role of evp, revenue strategy & innovation. He will work across linear and digital platforms to increase revenue drives. *Ronald Day*, who left Univision in 2012, will serve as evp, entertainment, responsible for programming, talent and promotions of primetime, daytime and specials for Telemundo and **Universo Networks**.

**FCC CommentGate:** The **FCC** Inspector General's office released to commissioner's its findings in a probe into whether there was a dedicated denial of service attack on the FCC's network neutrality docket May 7-8 of last year. Some have argued it was the volume of comments that broke the system, suggesting there was a political conspiracy in attributing issues to DDoS attacks. FCC chmn *Ajit Pai* said Monday that he's "deeply disappointed" that the agency's former CIO *David Bray*, "who was hired by the prior Administration and is no longer with the Commission, provided inaccurate information about this incident to me, my office, Congress, and the American people." He went on to add that he was disappointed someone working under Bray apparently disagreed with the info or had questions about it, but "didn't feel comfortable communicating their concerns to me or my office." Pai said the report "debunks the conspiracy theory" that he or his office had knowledge the DDoS info was inaccurate. Next up will be an overhaul of the ECFS system, with Congress approving funds last week that included a reprogramming request. Democrat *Jessica Rosenworcel* said the report proves that the DDoS claims were bogus. "What happened instead is obvious—millions of Americans overwhelmed our online system because they wanted to tell us how important internet openness is to them and how distressed they were to see the FCC roll back their rights," she said. "It's unfortunate that this agency's energy and resources needed to be spent debunking this implausible claim."

**Remembering Gerry Lenfest:** Cable TV giant and philanthropist *H.F. "Gerry" Lenfest*, 88, passed away on Sunday from complications from chronic illness, according to a family spokesman. Lenfest made a fortune in cable communications, but gave most of his \$1.2bln capital away before his death. "Gerry Lenfest was a model entrepreneur. He recognized that his relationship with the public didn't end with the delivery of cable TV services, but rather that there was an implied obligation to use the money he made to further the public good," said *Mark Dzuban*, pres and CEO, **SCTE-ISBE**. Read our full story at [Cablefax.com](http://Cablefax.com).

**TCA Trophies:** The **Television Critics Association** announced the 2018 TCA awards winners. For the third year in a row **FX** starred as the night's top winner. The network received four awards, three of them for its Cold War thriller "The Americans," which took home Program of the Year in addition to Outstanding Achievement in Drama and Individual Achievement in Drama for star *Keri Russell*. **BBC America's** "Killing Eve" claimed Outstanding New Program, and **CNN's** "Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown" was honored posthumously for Outstanding Achievement in News and Information.

**One and the Same:** **SCTE-ISBE** is working to create a generic access platform project within its standards. The project, which will be under the umbrella of the interface practices subcmte, aims to develop a common framework for interfaces within node housings. Standardized physical, thermal, mechanical and electrical interfaces for node housings or families of node housings will hopefully take the pressure off of operators, who devote resources to revamping housings for each new generation of outside plant access equipment.

**Trib Agrees:** **Tribune Broadcasting** is moving ahead as its deal to combine with **Sinclair** looks doomed. Tribune announced that it reached a comprehensive agreement with **Fox** to renew the existing Fox affiliations of eight Tribune Media stations, including **KCPQ-TV**, **KDVR-TV**, **WJW-TV**, **KTVI-TV**, **WDAF-TV**, **KSTU-TV**, **WITI-TV** and **WGHP-TV**.

**Programming:** **Hulu** acquired Australian psychological thriller series "Safe Harbour" for its US debut. The four-part, critically acclaimed drama will be available to stream on Aug 24. -- **Stadium**, a 24/7 net owned by **Sinclair**, **BAM-Tech**, **NHL**, **PGA TOUR** and **Meredith Corp**, announced a multi-conference package of 32 regular season college football games from Conference USA, Mountain West and Patriot League that will run across its over-the-air network. The games will stream on its website, apps, **Twitch** and channels on **Roku** and **FuboTV**. Stadium also partnered with **Facebook Watch** and will air all 32 games, including 14 that will be available exclusively on the platform.

**People:** **Discovery** appointed *Peter Faricy* to the newly created role of CEO, global direct-to-consumer. He will oversee the brand's global digital and direct-to-consumer business. Faricy comes to Discovery from **Amazon**, where he led the growth of Amazon Marketplace.

## CFX TECH

### Back to Her Roots

Sandy Howe may have started in the cable industry nearly 25 years ago, but with her recent move to **Technetix**, she's going right back to the beginning. Though she spent many years rising through the ranks at **Cisco** before moving to the leadership team at **Arris**, she began as a sales engineer at **Broadband Networks**, heading system design and sales of fiber optic transmission products for cable.

"One of the things that really drew me to Technetix was the ability to come back to my roots and be a part of a network," Howe said about her recent move. "When I started, we were doing 1.5 megabits to the home, more to specialized businesses than operators, and today with Technetix, there's an opportunity for us to take 10 gigabits to the home with the ability to double that."

Now she's partnering with Technetix's CTO and chief product officer to transform broadband networks while offering a better user experience. And while things are certainly a bit different from when she first began, when it comes to how Howe approaches this new chapter it is by remembering that "the more things change, in some ways, they're more the same."

Her early career saw her focused on building specialized broadband networks that were over fiber. Technetix aims to deliver savings to operators through a virtual segmentation solution that still allows them to get the full bandwidth and deliver 10 gigabits to consumers without having to dig.

"When it first started, we were just starting to build all the fiber, and the hybrid fiber coax systems still have so much life," Howe said. "It's amazing from just adjusting, dropping modules and certain equipment, that we're continually able to grow and expand that network."

The team at Technetix has been a leader when it comes to futureproofing, noticing years ago that power consumption on the network would be a major problem

within a few years. Over four years ago, the team built into its amplifiers and nodes requirements for power that are now being put into the Energy 2020 initiative. This all comes with double digit cost savings for the operators when it comes to their power bills.

"It's so key to be that trusted partner and advisor, working with the operators to figure out what they need to get that capacity, futureproof using the network and continually look at how to reduce the cost to do it," Howe said.

Although the innovation and creativity behind the continued technological growth in the industry is where some of Howe's passion lies, what separates the cable industry from so many others, in her mind, are the people that she's encountered over the years. To her, heralding in the next generation of doers is just as important as boosting technology today. Howe currently serves on the executive board of **WICT**, chairing the chapter development committee, while also acting as a board member for **SCTE**.

"You have to take care of and bring more people forward and develop more women in technology," Howe noted. "It's the people, it's all about the people." — Sara Winegardner

**Come Together:** Engineering company **Aricent** embarked on an open source collaboration with **CableLabs** on a virtual infrastructure platform on the Kubernetes and Docker container model. The SNAPS-Kubernetes platform was added to CableLabs's open source portfolio at the end of July. If adopted by MSOs, the new collaborative platform allows for easier deployment of cloud-native systems while cutting operating costs and giving them the opportunities to secure new sources of revenue by offering services such as streaming video or IoT applications. The solution is currently being shown at the CableLabs Summer Conference taking place this week in Keystone, Colorado.

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