

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Lo Rider: Locast Gears up For Philly Rollout

Locast, a nonprofit that offers broadcast signals over the internet, is gearing up to launch in Philadelphia “any day,” according to founder *David Goodfriend*, who said it just needs the last technical details shored up. From there, the plan is to launch to the rest of the top 10 DMAs and nearby second and third tier markets. Locast is already available in NYC, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Dallas and Denver, with usage seeing a big boost recently with its rollout on **Roku**. Users must be in the local market to view a broadcast signal. As has been the case with other markets, there won't be a big promotional push at launch in Philly. “I don't want to spend money on marketing before I have done a full round of fund-raising. And we will,” Goodfriend told **Cablefax**. “The marketing is important so that we can get the user numbers up to get the individual contributions up. For now, the uptake has been remarkable given the fact we don't do any promotion of any kind. That tells me there's a lot of demand for it.” Goodfriend participated in a Q&A with **BTIG** analysts *Rich Greenfield* and *Brandon Ross* on Monday, with the firm bullish on Locast. “This appears to be one of the most disruptive businesses we have seen and [it has avoided] all the legal challenges that impacted **Aereo**,” Greenfield said. When Locast launched in January, many (including even Goodfriend) expected there to be legal talk. “We have not received a cease & desist letter. We have not received a complaint in federal court. We have not even heard a public statement from any number of public stakeholders that they believe we're in violation of the law,” Goodfriend said during the BTIG call. “In fact, quite the opposite. I have heard from, and am now actively working with, local broadcasters who like what we're doing because they want their local signal available online.” Locast argues that it is legal because it's a nonprofit digital translator service that fits under US Copyright law, which allows nonprofits to retransmit broadcasters' signals. It asks users for donations to help fund the service, while it also seeks underwriters. The BTIG Q&A was timely given that **Altice USA** is currently embroiled in contentious negotiations with **21st Century Fox** that could see NY customers losing the **Fox** broadcast signal during **MLB** playoffs. Goodfriend said companies seem a little unsure about using Locast to change the dynamics on retrans. “There are some companies that would like to see something like us out there, but at the same time, those very same companies are not so sure they want to encourage cordcutting. I've detected a little bit of hesitation,” he said. By the way, Fox and **Cablevision's** spat in 2010 that saw a blackout in the NY market during the World Series helped lead to the

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creation of Locast. Cablevision, now owned by Altice USA, sent out a press release calling for a government entity or non-profit to retransmit the World Series over the Internet, citing the nonprofit exemption in the Copyright Act. "I saw that press release and thought, 'Hmmm. That's a really interesting point. You're a nonprofit. You can do this.' That was the first time I could recall that I thought of this idea that has now become Locast," Goodfriend, who heads the nonprofit Sports Fan Coalition, said during the call. "It could be any nonprofit. It could be a church, local government, a university... I don't want in any way to suggest what I'm doing here is somehow a monopoly cornering the market." As for Fox and Altice USA, **Fox Network Groups** channels were still available for **Optimum** and **Suddenlink** customers (NY areas customers also could lose a Fox O&O) at our deadline. The Sept 30 contract renewal deadline for **FX**, **Fox Sports 1**, **Nat Geo** and other nets has passed, but **Altice** and 21st Century Fox continue to negotiate.

West Coast Waves: Shortly after California Gov *Jerry Brown* signed the state's strict net neutrality bill into law Sunday, the **DOJ** filed a lawsuit against the state. The law restores much of what the **FCC** repealed last December with the Restoring Internet Freedom Order, preventing ISPs from blocking, slowing down or speeding up websites or apps or from charging websites for access to the ISPs' customer base or prioritized access. It is set to go into effect Jan 1, 2019. **Consumers Union**, the advocacy division of **Consumer Reports**, was a strong supporter of the bill. "California's net neutrality law will ensure that competition and the free market—not backroom agreements by internet providers—determine success on the internet, with all voices having equal chance to be heard online," Consumers Union senior policy counsel *Jonathan Schwantes* said. FCC chmn *Ajit Pai* was pleased with the DOJ's challenge, saying that as the internet is an interstate information service, only the federal government can set a policy. "Not only is California's internet regulation law illegal, it also hurts," Pai said, pointing to the law's banning of free-data plans that allow consumers to stream video and music exempt from consumers data limits. Some see the current situation as a prime example of why it's time for Congress to get involved. "Rather than 50 states stepping in with their own conflicting open internet solutions, we need Congress to step up with a national framework for the whole internet ecosystem and resolve this issue once and for all," **USTelecom** pres/CEO *Jonathan Spalter* said in a statement.

Broadband For All: **Cox** is doubling down on its promise to provide broadband to low-income families with pres *Pat Esser* announcing a \$20mln annual commitment to its Connect2Compete program. Esser announced the move at a press event in DC Monday. Esser pointed to a recent survey of more than 1700 Connect2Compete participants to showcase the program's impact, with 95% saying it made it easier to communicate with

Cablefax:

What's Happening in October

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>> Most Influential Minorities Magazine

Cablefax's annual Most Influential Minorities magazine, celebrates the men and women who are shaping the industry and opening doors for minorities across all areas of business.

>> Hispanic Heritage Month

This growing demo has a huge impact on every aspect of the industry. This series we'll explore upcoming trends in the Hispanic marketplace, examine the latest research and look at what networks and distributors are doing to cater to this powerful segment.

>> CTHRA

Cablefax looks at the HR side of the business. What do the hiring trends and needs say about where cable is headed? Coverage will include HR organization CTHRA's annual Symposium and awards.

>> Diversity Week

Cablefax will be on the ground in New York for all the Diversity Week happenings, including WICT's Leadership Conference, NAMIC's annual conference and The Walter Kaitz Annual Fundraising Dinner.

>> SCTE Cable-Tec Expo

Daily coverage from the Expo show floor along with a preshow special report. We'll look at the technology and standards development that you need to know about right now. Our preshow will also highlight SCTE, WICT and Cablefax's Woman in Technology award winner.

Events

Cablefax & NAMIC Diversity Breakfast
October 16
NYC

teachers and administrators at their children's school. Most respondents were first-time internet users. **FCC** chmn *Ajit Pai* made an appearance to support Cox's efforts to close the ever-present digital divide, which also includes digital literacy training through the Cox Digital Academy. In his remarks, Pai noted that closing the digital divide will require leadership from both the public and private sectors. He highlighted the FCC's CAF Phase II auction, which concluded last month, as well as plans to explore a telehealth pilot program for low-income Americans. "Here's the bottom line: Bridging the digital divide should be a national mission," Pai said. Also on deck was **EveryoneON** founder/executive chmn *Zach Leverenz*, saying that the Connect2Compete program has connected more than 400K. Connect2Compete is the national nonprofit's flagship program for K-12 students. The national non-profit has connected more than 600K people since 2012. "Whether you're for or against it, I think everyone agrees that our future is one that will be increasingly dependent on the technologies we build and the skills that they require," Leverenz said. "Broadband is the backbone, it is the foundation of our digital economy and it is utility that powers it. If we are to remain competitive as a nation, it will require that everyone have access to this tool."

Nick Names Head: **Viacom** announced it appointed *Brian Robbins* as pres of **Nickelodeon**, effective immediately. He most recently served as pres of **Paramount Pictures' Paramount Players** division, which has a close relationship with Nick as the companies have several co-branded films. *Wyck Godfrey*, pres of Paramount Pictures' Motion Group, will oversee day-to-day operations as the company searches for a replacement. Robbins appointment follows the June departure of former Nick pres *Cyma Zarghami*, who had been with the company since 1985 and pres since 2006. *Sarah Levy*, COO of Viacom Media networks, had stepped into the role in the interim.

Enter Player 3: After receiving a letter from the **Latinos in Information Sciences and Technology Association**, the office of North Carolina Attorney General *Josh Stein* is preparing to examine the contract impasse between **DISH** and **Univision**. Senior deputy attorney general *Kevin Anderson*, who directs the Consumer Protection Division of the North Carolina DOJ, reached out to DISH in a letter with three questions: are customers wishing to cancel their contract as a result of the **Univision** blackout facing early termination fees, has DISH continued to feature Univision in its advertisement and has DISH received other complaints from any of its current or prospective North Carolina consumers. DISH is currently working on its response to the inquiry. "The disagreement with Univision is a business dispute, plain and simple," DISH said in a statement to **CFX**. "We refuse to allow customers to pay outrageous fee increases, especially for content that is available for free over the air, as well as available online for substantially less than Univision is trying to charge DISH customers." DISH noted it's offering a \$5 per month credit to DishLATINO customers at this time, as well as over-the-air antennas in select markets. DISH could potentially be facing a similar inquiry in Illinois, as members of **The Chicago City Council Latino Caucus** sent a similar complaint to attorney general *Lisa Madigan*.

5G Live: The first commercial 5G network went live on Monday. **Verizon's** 5G Home network is now available in parts of Houston, Indianapolis, LA and Sacramento. Installations began Monday morning for "First on 5G" customers in those cities, with a Houston resident becoming the first 5G customer in the world, according to Verizon. The service is built on the open 5G TF network standard. Speaking of 5G, the **FCC's** October meeting will dive deeper into chmn *Ajit Pai's* 5G FAST Plan, according to his most recent blog. Key issues on the agenda include creating more opportunities for unlicensed innovation in the 6 GHz band, expanding spectrum opportunities for 5G in the 3.5 GHz band and updating the FCC's business data services rules for smaller, rural carriers in order to promote fiber deployment.

Stop Violence: **Lifetime** relaunched its "Stop Violence Against Women" campaign beginning on Monday. It kicked off with a PSA featuring sexual assault survivors *Alyssa Milano, Tarana Burke, Kitti Jones* and *Amanda Nguyen*. The initiative, timed with the arrival of Domestic Violence Awareness Month and the anniversary of the #MeToo movement, will also include educational resources and outreach to high schools and colleges nationwide. The Emmy-winning campaign first began in 2002.

Comcast Pauses: **Comcast** filed a Form 8-K with the **SEC** on Monday to announce its intention to pause its common stock repurchase program in 2019. The goal is to accelerate the reduction of indebtedness after the deal to purchase **Sky**. The company says it expects to complete \$5bln of repurchases in 2018.

Interactive Voting: **Comcast** announced an interactive feature on X1 that will allow customers to cast their vote for the 2018 **E!** People's Choice Awards show. Using their voice remote, they can say "Vote for People's Choice Awards" to launch On Demand where they can vote. It builds on voting integration tech with "The Voice" and "America's Got Talent." The show airs on E! Nov 11 at 9pm.

CTHRA's Excellence in HR Awards

CTHRA has honored Terese Farnen, recognition program manager for Cox Communications, with the Aspiring Leader award and Comcast NBCUniversal's HR team with Team Innovator of the Year honor. Since 2007, CTHRA has acknowledged these people and companies for going beyond their typical duties and thinking outside the box to shape their company culture and the field as a whole.

Terese Farnen, Cox Communications



Cox's Terese Farnen is a example of passion and energy. She currently serves as the manager of Cox's recognition program Amplifi, and co-led a cross-functional team that includes representatives from public affairs, HR, marketing, product, training and tech. The team works to encourage employees to learn more about the company's products through engagement, recognition and skills building, and

in turn improve the customer experience. Farnen was able to add fun into the mix by adding games into the Amplifi program. An average of 30% of employees play a game each month to increase product knowledge.

Overall, Farnen's initiatives in Amplifi have touched 97% of the entire employee base YOY. In the first half of 2018, 94% of Cox employees received recognition for work directly tied to company goals. She believes in the importance of recognizing employee achievements in not just boosting morale, but also in improving company culture and company productivity.

How has Amplifi positively influenced Cox?

A lot of times people see recognition as a touchy-feely aspect of HR, and the research is really showing that recognition and feeling like you contribute to the company's bottom-line and in some way that your work is meaningful is really important in today's world. When employees understand what their work is doing to contribute to the company's success, they have more of a stake in what they're doing and how they perform. A lot of that behavior is intrinsic.

In all the initiatives you've begun or taken part of since joining Cox, what are you most proud of?

It's really great to see a lot of out-of-the box thinking, and I think employees really care about the customer. Definitely launching a recognition platform for the whole company was the highlight of my career. I felt like it was a very collaborative work with all of the leaders and employees and getting the best possible program out there.

Comcast NBCUniversal

Between hurricanes tearing through the country and wildfires blazing in California,

Comcast NBCUni-

versal's HR team didn't have much time to breathe. The team provided immense disaster relief support in Florida, California and Texas by establishing a special emergency relief benefit plan and launching a dedicated disaster relief hub. The team organized a company-wide support program, Operation Teammate, that directed monetary support to people in need.

Comcast opened access to more than 268K WiFi hotspots to enable people to stay connected, and also created a digital housing sharesite and rideshare app to offer living spaces and transportation for employees. Comcast raised \$130mIn for the victims of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma as well as the wildfires in Northern California. "You just really care about these people," EVP of HR, Comcast Cable, *Bill Strahan* said.

How have you worked to integrate the legacy and values of Comcast NBCUniversal into your newest initiatives?

Strahan: We were started by an entrepreneur 55 years ago, and that spirit drives a lot of how we try to approach HR. We're comfortable taking risks and making decisions. We're big on innovation, we're deeply committed to the idea that we're better at innovation when we're diverse.

What were the biggest challenges you faced in rapidly responding to disasters in 2017?

Our culture is a very relationship driven one. We're this very large company that drives technology, but people here really like each other. During a disaster, we really want to make sure we take care of employees and their families. It's one thing to check the box saying that insurance is taking care of people, but it's another thing to realize when folks are having some of the worst weeks of their lives, how do we help them reduce the stress and take advantage of all the things available? We did a temporary change to our benefit rules. We took off all of those restrictions and eliminated co-pays during that period.

[Read extended profiles of this year's winners at Cablefax.com]

