

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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WLC 2018: Can Women Have It All?

Can women have it all? After Day 1 of Diversity Week 2018, it certainly seems so. The week kicked off at the Marriott Marquis in NYC Monday with the commencement of the 2018 **WICT** Leadership Conference. The event broke records, with more than 800 people attending the conference and 1.1K people at the Touchstones Luncheon. WICT pres/CEO *Maria Brennan* introduced the opening session by celebrating the launch of the organization's third international chapter, headquartered in Amsterdam. "WICT now serves 10,366 members globally making this the biggest and strongest WICT in our 39-year history," Brennan said. The conference also marks **Charter** vp *Marva Johnson's* first as chairman of the board. "A workplace that is diverse and inclusive is a better place, plain and simple," Johnson said. *David Cohen*, senior evp & chief diversity officer for **Comcast**, celebrated massive gains in representation throughout the company, noting that Comcast has seen a 63% increase of women at the vp level and a 91% increase in people of color at the vp level since 2011. Now, 52% of all 164K employees report to a woman or POC. The morning ended with *Bonnie Hammer*, chmn **NBCU Cable Entertainment**, sitting down with "**MSNBC Live**" anchor *Stephanie Ruhle*. Hammer discussed all aspects of her transformative career, saying an exec is only as successful as the people they surround themselves with. "It's the people you hire," Hammer said. "You can't do it alone. You have to surround yourself with the best and the brightest and I'm very excited to say that over half my direct reports are women, and they're absolutely the best in their skill. And of course I have some great guys too, but it's all about the people you surround yourself with and knowing how to listen, how to hear, how to help them become better at what you do." Hammer also denounces the idea that cable is a "dying industry," noting that she herself transitioned from a broadcast career when at the time it did not seem to make sense. "It has been a phenomenal ride, I don't think I could do what I'm doing right now if I hadn't grown up in cable and having to do everything. I love it. It's been an incredible ride and I think the programming that we do toe-to-toe can challenge anything on broadcast or the streamers right now." And when asked the age-old question if women truly can balance a family and a career, as in "can women have it all?" Hammer said yes, but with a caveat. "Women can have it all, but not at the same time," she explained. "People think you can have balance in your life on a day-to-day basis, but it's BS. It just doesn't happen. You're always going to feel guilty at some point in time. You have to

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Sandy
Matthew
Harvey
Irma
Maria
Florence
Michael

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be comfortable with a bit of a seesaw. You're never going to feel like 'I've got it down and everything's so wonderful.' The richness of having both parts of that world and you grow older as you see your kids grow."

Hurricane Michael Recovery: Mediacom said it has outages from widespread loss of commercial power along with downed lines and structural damage throughout its Georgia and Florida systems following last week's hurricane. Mediacom's main transmission lines servicing Havana, Bristol, Port St Joe and Apalachicola, FL, suffered severe damage. As of 10am ET Monday, there were nearly 15K customers without service in Florida, which includes Mexico Beach, Panama City and Apalachicola. Phone/HSD was restored to a large portion of Sandestin Sunday afternoon, with work continuing to get video back up to Sandestin and Bonifay. In Georgia, which includes Albany, Valdosta and Americus, there were approximately 25K customers without service, with many expected to regain services as commercial power is restored to plan equipment and individual homes. Operations remain closed in many hard hit areas that sustained catastrophic damage, including Bainbridge and Mexico Beach. For Comcast, Panama City continues to be the hardest hit market. The company is working directly with law enforcement and utilities there to gain access as soon as it's declared safe to do so. Comcast moved its "WiFi on Wheels" van (a mobile hotspot) a little closer to Panama City Monday, collaborating with FEMA and other emergency personnel to do so. Comcast said it's restored service to 85% of those impacted in Tallahassee. Hurricane Michael severed the connection to Comcast's network that serves the Dothan, AL, area. Over the weekend, crews were able to restore that connectivity, which brought back Xfinity services for the majority of local customers. WOW! said a "significant" part of its network in Dothan has been restored, while access to Panama City continues to be limited. WOW!'s main office in the city was severely damaged. The overbuilder said its headend in Panama City is operating on generator power, noting there's widespread power loss in the area. As of Saturday morning, it estimated that approximately 30K customers were without service. WOW! has committed to a \$25K donation to assist its employees with their recovery and employees are donating to recovery efforts through the American Red Cross. The latest FCC communications status report listed more than 157K cable and wireline subs in FL without service as of 11am ET Monday. For GA, the number was close to 62K. Two broadcast stations hit by the storm returned to the air over the weekend, while WDHN and WFLX were still reported as out of service.

Fox RSN Sale: When it comes to the 22 Fox RSNs that Disney has agreed to divest for DOJ approval of its \$71.3bln purchase of 21st Century Fox entertainment assets, ACA wants to make sure they don't go to a Big 4 TV station or an MVPD within the same local market as the RSN. If a Big 4 broadcaster got a same-market RSN, it "would allow a single firm to threaten to withhold two sets of must-have programming," ACA told the DOJ in a letter Monday. It warned



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such a scenario would lead to increased retrans fees. As for same-market MVPDs, ACA argued it would result in the same vertical integration problem the DOJ outlined in its objections to the **AT&T-Time Warner** merger.

WICT Notebook: Among the breakout sessions at Monday's **WICT** Leadership Conference was a discussion on the digital revolution and the rise of artificial intelligence. "I've really seen the company transform from a cable company to a true innovation company. We're at the intersection of technology and media, and we're taking the best of both of those worlds and bringing our customers the best of those experiences," said *Jeanine Heck*, vp, AI product, **Comcast**. "Artificial intelligence is really just teaching computers to think like humans, or even beyond what humans can do." Heck explained Comcast currently has multiple applied AI verticals: media analytics, content discovery, the digital home, customer experience and voice control, which includes more than 20mln remotes in customer homes and 6bln commands deployed over 2017. "We take anonymized and aggregated data, we label it, and we take those labels and train the engine with it. When you get into more complicated speech, you can have a lot of consuming utterances. Understanding people's intent is really challenging, but data labeling is one of the best ways to train your engine and make it smarter," Heck said.

WICT Touchstone Lunch: The highlight Diversity Week Day 1 was the **WICT** Touchstones Luncheon. Before the honorees were awarded, WICT surprised attendees with a short panel between **IFC Films & Sundance Selects** co-pres *Lisa Schwartz*, **IFC Film's** "Wildlife" writer/ep *Zoe Kazan* and actress *Carey Mulligan*, star of the film. All three women gave life advice to their younger selves, highlighting the importance of women. Kazan said "I've just had a baby, and women have come out of the woodwork to help me. Other women are like a battery power we all have, this incredible source of strength." WICT honored *Kristine Faulkner*, svp, gm, **Cox** Home Security & Smart Home; *Izabella Wiley*, gm, **A+E Networks Poland & CEE A&E Networks**; and *Leslie Iles*, vp, corporate programs & indirect procurement for **Arris** with Women to Watch honors. Wiley became the first person from Central and Eastern Europe to receive the award. **Media-com** programming & HR evp *Italia Commisso Weinand* and **Qurate Retail** chief merchandising & interactive officer *Mary Campbell* took home the Women of the Year awards. Try as she might, Weinand couldn't help but get political. Making it known she was an immigrant from Italy, she jokingly said "They warned me not to get political!" after audience applause. In her speech, she emphasized "freedom and respect to all. Let me say that again. Freedom and respect to all, especially when the stakes are high." Diversity Week continues tomorrow with WICT Day 2 and **NAMIC** Day 1.

Data Dealing: Marketers using **FreeWheel** will now be able to leverage **DRIVE**, a suite of advanced advertising solutions designed to help marketers reach consumers on platforms such as OTT and digital video. The **DRIVE** initiative builds on FreeWheel's collaboration with **Nielsen** to expand measurement to OTT inventory and connected TV on demand. **DRIVE** allows for the measurement of audiences using Nielsen Digital Ad Ratings, which delivers a view of digital audiences in a similar way to how linear audience measurement would be delivered. -- **Standard Media Index** is upping its accuracy through an agreement with **Nielsen**. Starting on Oct 23, SMI will leverage Nielsen Ad Intel's occurrence level data as the source of spots for its AccuTV national TV product. AccuTV models out 30% of ad spend for SMI using occurrence data. Working with 5 of the 7 major media holding groups and independents, SMI determines 70% of the ad spend in the national TV market and 60% of premium digital. The deal also expands SMI's coverage from the top 75 networks to more than 130 channels.

FCC Fire: The **FCC's** 12th Street HQ was set to reopen Tuesday after sprinklers were activated over the weekend to put out a small fire on the fifth floor. The water caused localized damage on that floor as well as several floors below, with the headquarters closing Monday for assessment and remediation. No word from the FCC on what caused the flames.

Black Hills Broadband: **Vast Broadband** is on track to deliver 1 Gig speeds to the Black Hills, SD, starting in November. Between residential and business customers, Vast serves nearly 60K customers in the region. This isn't the end of Vast's rollouts. It plans to bring 1 Gig service to consumers in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota starting in early 2019.

Retail in Mobile: **Comcast** opened its first Xfinity customer retail store in Mobile, AL. The 4000 square-foot facility is part of the company's broader national effort to positively transform how customers do business with Comcast. It features an automated payment kiosk, multiple service counters, interactive demonstration and dedicated showcase areas.

Holiday Marketing: **Hallmark Channel** teamed with Cost Plus World Market for a sweeps that will give one winner a walk-in role on an upcoming original movie on the net, as well as a \$2K World Market gift card. It's all part of Hallmark's "Countdown to Christmas" celebration. In addition, World Market will be the exclusive retailer of The Republic of Tea's "Hallmark Channel's Countdown to Christmas" tea.

CFX TECH

The Professor: A Tech Rock Star

It takes a lot more than a stable WiFi connection to deliver that video to your TV, smart phone or tablet at the quality that you're looking for—let alone finding a way to watch without buffering!

Behind the scenes, the focus used to be on the quality-of-service provided to users. Technicians would base key metrics off of bandwidth, package drop rate and network delay. Today, the concerns have morphed, instead centering around how users will perceive the quality of the stream and if the creative intent of the producers themselves has been properly preserved during the distribution process.

But what if there was a framework that could be used by everyone from engineers to executives to determine exactly where things are falling apart in the distribution channel? This problem is what one man affectionately known as “The Professor” hopes to have solved.

Dr Zhou Wang, **SSIMWAVE** chief science officer and co-founder, is proposing a unified end-to-end framework that will determine Quality-of-Experience, a metric that measures “the overall acceptability of an application or service as perceived subjectively by the end-user.” This QoE is meant to take the place of the now outdated QoS metric. Underneath that framework is the Structural Similarity (the SSIM) algorithm that earned him an Engineering Emmy Award back in 2015. It's now become the most-widely used QoE algorithm in the world, seeing more than 44K academic citations as of July 2018. He'd be quick to tell you that he didn't do it alone, looking to his other co-founders and PhDs *Abdul Rehman* and *Kai Zeng*.

The group will be on-hand at next week's **SCTE-ISBE Cable-Tec Expo** in Atlanta. Wang will be presenting his paper on the solution at Monday's “How to Enhance QoE for Video and WiFi Services” panel at 2:15pm. The group has exhibited in the past, granting them an opportunity to bring together the scientists behind the tech with the client companies.

“In this world, the Professor and Abdul have become mini-rock stars,” SSIMWAVE vp, marketing, *Saj Jamal* said, describing how other tech professionals have literally asked for selfies with the duo.

Wang's idea may seem fairly obvious. With the rapid growth of video distribution, why not create a more accurate way to determine the visual QoE? In reality, it's taken 20 years to bring that idea to life. It was in a 1998 paper on video quality assessment where Wang said that a video's quality should not be determined by measuring a signal. Instead, it should be measured by how a human being sees video. While his peers discouraged him from pursuing the idea, he kept pursuing it. While he would call it an “interesting problem,” Jamal still tells the Prof that “an interesting problem to you is ‘let's find the most difficult problem on the planet and solve it.’”

The easiest and best solution to ensure smooth, faithful video delivery would be to place human inspectors at every stage, from encoding to routing to rendering and everything in between. Of course, that's far from viable.

CEO Rehman and Zeng, who were Wang's students, worked together on how to make that base idea work in the digital age while also future-proofing as much as possible. The end result was what they now call the SSIMPLUS Live Monitor.

The team created objective QoE monitoring probes that should “see” and “behave” like human inspectors, perceiving each and every pixel like humans. They then assign a specific score for the stream at that point in the process. If the score drops at any point in the process, engineers can quickly identify an issue within the stream and fix it, sometimes before a viewer would even notice.

At this point, it's all about adoption. This form of video monitoring is attempting to shift how an entire industry has approached the issue for decades. SSIMWAVE told **CFX** that SSIMPLUS has already been deployed to millions of US subs, and if the Prof's enthusiasm has anything to do with it, things will only grow from here. — *Sara Winegardner*

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Cox Hampton Roads 40th Anniversary Report

There's a rich history behind Cox Hampton Roads. It was the birthplace of Cox Business Services in 1993, and with its large military presence, including the world's largest naval base, shipyards and miles of waterfront property, it's been a good test market for other services over the years. It's also where president Pat Esser started his Cox Communications career.



James Robbins collaborates with several team members. Robbins ran Cox Communications for two decades; during that time, he expanded Cox fourfold and made customer service a high priority in an industry where it had not always been valued.

"Cox Virginia will always be special to me. I drove there almost 40 years ago hoping for a job; it's turned into a life-enriching journey where I continue to learn every day," Esser said. "Virginia was also one of the early markets where Cox offered business telecom services, something that has become a growth engine for the company and delivers almost \$2.5 billion in revenue today. We continue to thrive when our teams closest to the customer take calculated risks in response to market opportunities."

When the region's 40th anniversary rolled around this year, leadership decided to do more than cut a sheet cake and hand out corporate swag to employees. "Cox started in 1898 and we kind of operate, in my opinion, with a higher purpose. We really focus on investing in our communities—where we live, where we serve, where our employees also live," said Cox Virginia svp J.D. Myers, II, who has spent 13 years with Cox, all in Virginia. Four years ago, he began running the entire division, which includes Roanoke and Northern Virginia along with Hampton Roads.

"For me, the anniversary was an opportunity to engage with our employees, engage with our customers

and more importantly, engage with the community in a meaningful way so we can celebrate. And it allowed us to tell the great story of our past, but also look to the future and what's to come with the Internet of Things," Myers said.

One of the ways Cox Virginia stepped up to celebrate was by launching a 40 Acts of Kindness campaign this summer, with 40 acts of kindness that totaled \$40K donated throughout the Hampton Roads community. Sometimes it was something fun like tickets to a concert. Other acts included employee volunteer projects within the community, such as an elementary school makeover. Four nonprofits received \$3500 grants, with groups nominated by United Way and then Cox VA employees voted on which ones they felt should receive the money (Cox Virginia provided \$2500 and United Way added \$1000 to each).

Among the grant recipients is The Peninsula Agency on Aging, which said the money will keep 30 seniors fed for a month via Meals on Wheels or provide 30 non-emergency medical trips.

"We were surprised and honored that Cox employees chose PAA as one of the non-profits to support. So often, and understandably, the focus of this type of initiative is on children and education so it was gratifying to see Cox employees include older adults," said PAA pres/CEO William Massey. "I think this just goes to show how the community and wonderful organizations like Cox Communications are starting to see how important it is to support the work done by PAA in support of older adults, their caregivers and our communities."



Pete Hogge (L), a 40-year Cox veteran, with George Guion, a former Cox 11 employee, at the Virginia Beach Pavilion for a Ham Radio convention.



Cox Virginia employees selected four nonprofits to receive \$3500 grants as part of its 40 Acts of Kindness campaign for Hampton Road's 40th anniversary.

Cox parent Cox Enterprises is 120 years old this year, founded by James M. Cox, who later served as Ohio's governor and was the Democratic nominee for president in 1920 with Franklin Roosevelt as his running mate. "As a company, Cox has been and always will be very people centric. Our founder James M. Cox always said, 'If you do what's right for people, you do what's right for business and in turn society,'" explained Nneka Chiazor, vp, public & govt affairs for Cox VA. "So we started planning with how do we what's right for employees and how do we have that ripple effect."

That ripple effect is going beyond Cox VA's imagination. "Since we've started the 40 Acts of Kindness, other companies in the area have started asking, 'should we do this Acts of Kindness as a region?' Maybe for the month of X or for this cause. Those conversations are happening now," Chiazor said, crediting United Way of Virginia Peninsula pres/CEO Steven Kast for helping come up with the idea.

Other components of the anniversary campaign have included showing off the future, with Cox VA nearing Gigabit rollouts for the entire footprint. Cox Virginia held a "Leaders Conference" that Esser attended along with community leaders such as Virginia Beach mayor Louis Jones. Cox Virginia made a \$10K donation to the area's Dress for Success chapter and filmed a PSA for the group. The division also just wrapped a scavenger hunt that sent charitable organizations and businesses in the Hampton Roads area out to find various locations in the area. The winner receives \$10K for the participant's designated charity, after completing tasks such as dancing the Cotton Eye Joe outside Portsmouth's Hill House Museum or taking a boy band selfie with the statue of

Grace Sherwood, who was tried for witchcraft in 1706.

The 40th anniversary initiative has been so successful that Cox VA is looking at using it on a smaller scale for other milestones, such as anniversaries of its first digital customer or first Gigablast customer. Next year, when Cox Northern Virginia turns 20, it will be tweaked for that market. "It's almost a turnkey now," said Myers, a proud veteran who has made sure the military community is well represented in the celebration.

And at the heart of the campaign are Cox employees. Hampton Roads has several team members who have celebrated at least 30 years with the company. They joined Myers and Esser for a special breakfast last month along with other employees from all Virginia markets. The area has two employees who have been there for 40 years. One of those, Pete Hogge, Cox Business operations supervisor, is based in Hampton Roads. He was appropriately feted, throwing out the first pitch at the Norfolk Tides game for Cox Family Night at the ballpark. Passing on Cox's legacy of giving back is as important to leaders as firmly establishing Cox's position as a connectivity company.

"I spend time with every new hire. I carve out an hour each monthly for every new hire class that comes in and spend time talking about being part of the community," said Myers. "I say, 'if you're not a person engaging in the community and you don't have a desire to be part of it, you picked the wrong company to work for.'"



Cox's 40 Acts of Kindness Campaign included several giveaways, like these surprise Zac Brown Band concert tickets.

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