

# Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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## WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY AWARD WINNER 2017

# Deborah Picciolo

## Charter

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## Rocky Mountain High Tech: A Preview of Cable-Tec 2017

By Alex Silverman

The **SCTE-ISBE Cable-Tec Expo** is perhaps the most future-focused event on the industry's calendar, but the location of this year's iteration will allow the industry to harken back to its roots. The mile-high city of Denver will host the Expo at the Colorado Convention Center from Oct 17-20, bringing cable's brightest minds back to where it all began.

"The city of Denver has played an integral role throughout the history of the industry and has remained a hub for cable innovation for decades. It seems fitting to host an event like SCTE in such a special city," said **Charter Communications** evp, engineering and information technology *Jim Blackley*. He is serving as a co-chair of this year's show alongside **Altice USA** vice chmn business development for network and technology services *Terry Cordova*.

SCTE pres/CEO *Mark Dzuban*, who resided in the region for years during his tenure with **TCI**, pointed out that in addition to its history, the city still has a "center of gravity" for the industry. Both Charter and **Comcast** have a significant engineering presence in the area, and a number of vendors call Colorado home. It is also home base for partners like **Cable-Labs** and **The Cable Center**.

With technological change taking place at an accelerating rate, SCTE has modified this year's event to accommodate a broader scope of topics. For the first time, the Expo program is organized into six separate "tracks," each of which caters to a slightly different audience: Business Services, Cloud Visualization, Customer Journey, Evolved Networks, Future Services & Technologies and Security & Authentication.

"Our job is to adapt and to provide as much value as we can," Dzuban said. "In the last ten years, we've had wireless, card virtualization, security has been a significant issue, business services is now part of our offering. It's really grown to a much greater spectrum of science than we had 10-15 years ago."

This year's agenda features 98 presenters, up from



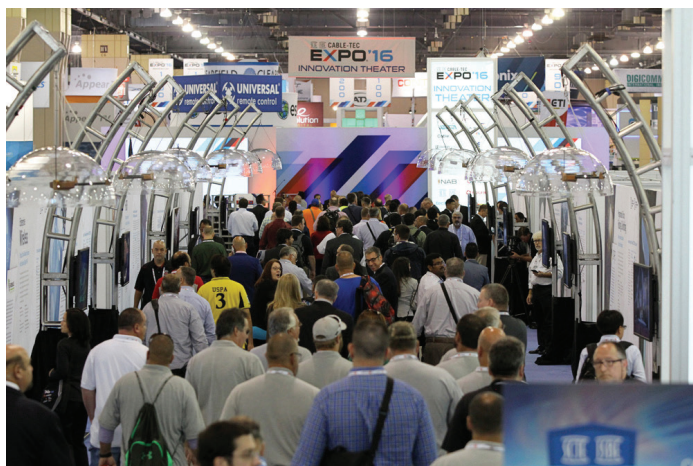
**A view of the busy Expo Hall from Cable-Tec 2016. This year's conference has more than 400 companies offering demonstrations of the latest and greatest in tech.**

72 in Philadelphia last year, including some of the most powerful figures in cable today. Dzuban said this is the first time the lineup has featured CEOs like **Liberty Global's Mike Fries**, Charter's *Tom Rutledge*, **Arris** CEO *Bruce McClelland* and Comcast's *Dave Watson*. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from a number of the powerbrokers driving consolidation and change in the industry.

As for hot topics heading into this year's Expo, Blackley identified wireless as the technology he is most excited about.

"As new technologies emerge, the role of WiFi inside and outside the home continues to evolve," he said. "It is important that we continue to rapidly adapt to emerging standards being adopted around us. I am looking forward to the discussions surrounding next-generation wireless access and how the industry can further leverage the tremendous value and capacity of our fixed broadband networks to provide innovative new experiences for consumers."

Dzuban identified a number of other trends likely to make headlines at this year's event, including the development of more cost-effective and high-performing routers and IP infrastructure to account for bandwidth growth, preventative network maintenance and the impact of consolidation on network efficiency. Also expect to hear quite a bit about



***Last year's Cable-Tec Expo in Philadelphia marked the introduction of the Innovation Theater, an exhibit space featuring sponsored content. This year's Innovation presenters include Corning, Juniper Networks and Intel.***

### DOCSIS 3.1.

As of late September, SCTE was on track to match last year's record attendance of more than 10,000 in Philadelphia, though the association head acknowledged it's hard to account for last-minute registration. Dzuban expects this year's crowd to take on more of an international flavor, as the group has been active in expanding its reach in South and Central America. Expect a particularly diverse congregation for Friday morning's breakfast for international attendees.

After debuting at last year's Expo, the Innovation Theater is returning for a sophomore season. The 150-seat venue within the exhibit hall will host sponsored presentations on topics ranging from Ethernet

mid-mile aggregation architecture to virtualizing cable access to leveraging virtual security infrastructure.

Dzuban proclaimed that in the wake of the Cable Show shuttering last year, Expo is the largest cable-telecommunications event in North America today. More than its size and scope, however, what makes the Expo special is that it serves as a place where engineers and technologists can engage with one another and focus on tactical aspects of deployment and implementation.

"This is not just an event for folks to go and socialize, although sharing ideas and thinking is important," Dzuban said. "This is where the rubber meets the road and you see the most current science, how to deploy it and how to operate it."

## FAST FACTS

- Cable-Tec Expo takes place October 17-20 at the Colorado Convention Center in Denver.
- Expo's exhibit hall is open October 18 from 2pm-6pm; October 19 from 11am-5pm and October 20 from 9am-1pm.
- With the demise of NCTA's annual trade show, Expo is now the largest US event in cable.
- The show is popular with international attendees, drawing professionals from more than 60 countries.
- Share your experiences from the show with #CableTecExpo.
- Chart your show with the SCTE-ISBE Cable-Tec Expo 2017 Mobile App. Available in Apple's App Store and on Google Play, it lets you bookmark exhibitors, rate sessions and more.

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## Expo Week – Don't Miss!

With more than 100 hours of educational sessions, events, speakers and other learning opportunities, it's hard to keep track of what all SCTE-ISBE's Cable-Tec Expo has to offer. Below are a few highlights to consider when planning your schedule in Denver.

**Small and Midsized Operator Experience:** For the first time, a special program has been created to help professionals from smaller MSOs get the most out of the tech conference. Developed with the help of **ACA** and **NCTC**, the track includes seminar activities, VIP seating, workshops and other events, such as an NCTC member gathering on Tuesday and an ACA Washington Update on Thursday.

### Wednesday's General Session:

Be sure to get to the Bellco Theater by 8:30am so as not to miss out on a keynote with **Liberty Global** CEO Mike Fries. Always interesting to hear an international perspective... **Charter** chief *Tom Rutledge* also will offer remarks during the two-hour opener, followed by a panel discussion that includes Charter's *Deborah Picciolo*, Comcast's *Ed Marchetti* and **Cox's** *Patricia Martin*.

**Opening Ceremony:** Get yourself to the Exhibit Hall at 2pm to see the march of the robots! FIRST Robotics Competition teams and their bots will march as part of the floor's opening ceremony. They'll then set up shop in the hall's Event Lounge so you can check out real-world engineering by students.

**Wireless:** Wireless talk is expected to be a major topic at the conference. Tuesday's workshop "Checking the Signal: What's Next in WiFi?" (Tuesday, 2pm) will delve into the latest tech and how it interacts with licensed spectrum. At 3:15pm Tuesday, a panel will dig into the advent of 5G wireless tech and steps that are needed to prepare networks and services. At the same time, there's a WiFi optimization workshop featuring **CableLabs** wireless director *Mark Poletti* and **SCTE-ISBE's** *Steve Harris*.

**Annual Awards Luncheon:** Wednesday's lunch includes **Comcast Cable** pres/CEO *Dave Watson* and **Arris** CEO *Bruce McClelland*, who will offer insights on tech and business.

**WICT Tech It Out:** It's been eight years since **WICT** launched this program aimed at fostering female leadership in tech, while also raising awareness about opportunities for women in the field. This

year's conference (Thursday, 1:45pm-3:30pm) will feature a keynote from *Raychelle Burks*, assistant professor of chemistry at St. Edwards University. She'll discuss how she uses pop culture to ignite an interest in and appreciation of science with her students. She'll also touch upon the importance of increasing the pipeline of women in STEM fields. The event also includes a panel discussion on thriving

as a leader in tech that features Woman In Technology award winner *Deborah Picciolo* of **Charter** (see Q&A with her on p6) as well as **Comcast's** *Sherita Ceasar*, **Arris' Tal Laufer** and **The Cable Center's** *Jana Henthorn*.

### SCTE-ISBE International Cable-Tec Games: Winners

of local technical ability challenges face off in the championship to see who is the best at cable splicing, meter reading, cable jeopardy and more. *Greg Babinski*, system technician with **Charter** in New Port Richey, FL, was the overall winner last year. He's claimed the title three times in nine years.

**26th Annual Golf Tournament:** It can't be all work with no play. The Lone Tree Golf Club will be available for the use of the SCTE Golf Committee and all properly registered tournament participants. Tee off is at noon on Tuesday.

**Cable TV Pioneers Banquet:** This ticketed event will see the induction of 20 new members to the Cable TV Pioneers. The black tie/dressy cocktail banquet is set for Tuesday evening at the Brown Palace. The 2017 class features **Charter's** *Tom Adams*, **Showtime's** *Matt Blank*, **GCI Liberty's** *Steve Brett*, **ComSonics' Jack Bryant, **Charter's** *Cynthia Carpenter*, **Cisco's** *John Chapman*, **CTAM's** *Anne Cowan*, **Comcast's** *Chris Dunkeson*, **C-SPAN's** *Jana Fay*, **Charter's** *Charlotte Field*, **CommScope's** *Tony Finger*, **American Cable Services' James George**, **Arris' Tim Gropp**, **Ambit Project Management's** *Larry Hanson*, **In Demand's** *Dale Hopkins*, **BET's** *Debra Lee*, **NESN's** *Sean McGrail*, retired **Time Warner** exec *Ron McMillan*, **DSV Services' Jay Vaughan** and consultant *Richard White*.**



## 2017 WIT Winner

*The annual Women in Technology Award, presented jointly by WICT, SCTE-ISBE and Cablefax, is bestowed on a woman whose professional achievements have advanced the industry as a whole. This year's recipient, Deborah Picciolo of Charter, embodies that spirit. As Charter's svp, operations for the West Region, she is a driving force behind innovation in the industry. Her region was the first in the company to test one-hour appointment windows versus the previous four-to-six hour windows. Picciolo has been in the industry for 30 years, with 10 of those spent at Time Warner Cable. Before that, she was in operations for Comcast, AT&T Broadband and MediaOne. We spoke with her about her career as one of the most highly regarded professionals in cable technology.*

### What does this award mean to you?

This recognition is such a huge honor. I'm delighted and humbled to join a group of such incredible women who have contributed so much to our industry and continue to help eliminate boundaries for women in the workplace. While this award is a testament to a great deal of personal hard work, I have incredible support—including my family, my Charter team, my peers and mentors. I really owe it all to them.

### Looking back at your 30 years in the industry, is there a particular moment that you feel like helped you to get to where you are today?

I'm not sure if I can point to one specific event, but I would say that all of the merger and integration activity I have experienced over the years has given me a lot of valuable insights. I have had the great opportunity to work for so many incredible companies and leaders, including Continental Cablevision, MediaOne, AT&T Broadband, Comcast, Time Warner Cable and now Charter. After six major mergers and many MSO consolidations, you learn how to navigate new cultures, people and processes, and get to meet and build new teams. It's been an incredible journey.

### Was it ever difficult being a woman in technology?

Throughout my career, I've been fortunate to be surrounded by supportive people, both men and women. Especially working in field operations, where I'm often one of the few women in the room, I've always stayed focused on my goals, objectives and driving the business. I make sure my performance speaks for itself. Organizations like WICT have also been critical over the years because they're a constant resource for making connections with other inspiring women and feeling like you're all in this together.

### What have been some of the challenges of transitioning from Time Warner Cable to Charter in the West Region?

It's now been almost a year and a half since we transitioned to Charter and things have gone extraordinary

well. The teams have done a great job with all of the changes as we work to standardize everything we do—systems, products, policies, processes... everything.

Our job as leaders is to ensure we have a great strategy and plan. That includes maintaining excellent communication, meaning, having the ability to explain why we are implementing changes, then really listening to the feedback from all aspects of the business and using it to improve our products, services and business.

### One of the areas your region has led the company on is one-hour appointment windows. Can you talk about that intersection of tech and customer experience? How do you encourage a team of engineers to see the big picture?

Yes, we were the first to launch one-hour appointments and it has really improved the day of job experience for our customers.

One of our biggest challenges as an industry was tackling that old "cable guy" perception—that customers had to wait all day for a tech to show up and when he finally did arrive, he lacked the look and professionalism. We wanted and needed to turn that whole perception on its head. We did it by ensuring the customer was fully informed, had a very tight appointment window and was being communicated to every step of the way.

It has been a game changer for us in terms of transforming the customer experience, significantly improving CSAT and NPS scores, installation and trouble call completion, improving on-time performance and receiving great feedback from our customers about our technicians.

We knew the one-hour appointments were something our customers wanted and we worked hard to figure out how to get there. By leveraging technology, our teams did a lot of research and testing to optimize the process from two- and four-hour windows down to one. We collaborated with a couple of partners on an interface that provides a call the day before the appointment, a call an hour before the tech arrives and an email or text notice that shows a picture of the tech and his current location which a customer can follow on a map. It was a major

advance in technology and service that required a great deal of support cross-functionally. I'm extremely proud of our teams. It's been a major differentiator between us and our competitors in customer satisfaction—the feedback has been incredibly positive.

In addition, we worked closely with our customer care team on arrival time versus appointment window and helped communicate anticipated job completion times. Customers are now better informed about what to expect during their appointment.

We also recognized how important it is to improve the day of customer experience. We updated our technicians' uniforms (no jeans), now require plastic booties over work boots, and also upgraded their tools and technology across the board. We have also significantly improved their soft skills training and customer education expectations. This one truly was a team effort. I'm very proud of what we accomplished.

### What will be your top priorities for 2018?

In 2018, I hope we can continue to build on the success we've achieved over this past year. We will keep looking for unique ways to grow our customer base by providing the best value in the business. It's also important that we stay innovative and deliver high quality products and services that our customers want.

### What are you most proud of professionally?

I'm most proud of the teams we've built. I have the privilege of working with some of the brightest and most innovative people in the industry every day, and I know how rare that can be. Finding the right people can be the hardest part of business. It makes celebrating wins that much more rewarding.

### How do you unwind outside of work?

I enjoy getting away and spending time with my family. We love beach vacations where we get to enjoy water sports, play cards, board games and read great books.

My daughter and I love doing pilates, so we fit that in as much as we can. Now that my children have graduated college and are beginning their own careers, I enjoy hearing about their experiences at work and helping them with advice as they face their own challenges.

### What should the industry do to get more women into an operations track?

We should be proud of our industry's efforts to hire and retain more women in our businesses, but there's so much more that can be done to increase female representation in operations and especially at the executive level. The entertainment and technology space is rapidly changing and we need to do a better job at spreading the message about all of the opportunities to innovate in this business. I'm glad that Charter is committed to building a workforce that's reflective of the communities we serve and supporting WICT leadership programs is an important part of that mission.

### How do you personally encourage women to either consider a technology career or just be less afraid to talk tech?

For women who are passionate about technology, or any industry, it's really important for them to see other female leaders who are thriving and making an impact. Having strong female figures to aspire to in a male-dominated environment can make a huge difference in perceiving what's achievable and not being afraid to take risks. If you don't see that the opportunity is there, you might be less inclined to take that first step.

Throughout my career, I've followed where my passion for the business, operations and technology took me. I learned everything I could about this business and used that knowledge to try different roles and responsibilities. One of the great things about this industry is that there are so many possible opportunities for people with all types of interests, backgrounds and experiences—there's a place for everyone.



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