

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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5 Questions: Comcast's McSarrow Dives Into the Customer Experience

Ahead of his Cable Center Cable Hall of Fame induction Thursday night, we caught up with Comcast svp, customer experience and former NCTA pres/CEO Kyle McSarrow. We'll have more from McSarrow and all of the Hall of Famers in our May 2 issue of Cablefax. But here's a bit to whet your appetite. **You're in a corporate role now at Comcast, but you've also ran regional markets. How do these different aspects of the business build on one another?** The experiences I had leading regional markets in Utah and the state of Washington helped me understand at a strategic level where the business is going, and certainly gave me an appreciation for how representatives of our customers think about our business. It probably is one of the things that sparked my interest in being very close to our employees and customers. ... I didn't think about it as "customer experience," but at the end of the day, that was the job. Being a market leader, you really have two roles—caring for your customers and caring for your employees. The blocking and tackling... all your interactions with customers and employees, I hope has given me an interesting perspective now that I've moved into a job called customer experience because I kind of lived it for six years on the frontline. **Was there a particular issue that came up a lot when you were running a region?** I came away with an appreciation for the fact our employees don't have to be convinced. In fact, they're pretty passionate about providing an exceptional customer experience. It was about how do we support them—do we have the right tools, the right policies in place... For customers, I spent a lot of time going on ride-outs or listening to customer service calls, and the overriding common denominator for all of that is just 'how do we communicate with our customers?' For a long time, communications with our customers was essentially reactive. They called us if they had a question or a pain point or something that needed to be fixed... What we're really trying to move to is a customer experience model where we're focused on a constant communication using technology. A lot of SMS texting, emails, but what we call it is a two-way dialog. Contact between us and customers is a good thing if it's contextually relevant to our customer, it meets their expectations, it's helpful. **What does the ideal customer experience look like?** The ideal is they don't have to do anything. The ideal interaction strategy, and we're pouring a ton of investment into this, is that our products should represent the customer experience. If there's a problem, the product or the network self-heals. If that doesn't happen, the next step is that we

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should provide a very seamless way, if the customer chooses, to self-serve... If all that doesn't work, we should have a support system that lets them interact with our agents and techs in many different channels (chat, text, social media, phone, etc). **You once said there were no new regulatory issues, they just keep getting repackaged and rebottled. As you sit on the regulatory sidelines now, do you stand by that?** I'll just say this. It wasn't lost on me that we still have had legislative fights about net neutrality. **You are being inducted into the Cable Hall of Fame. Some would say you're a young one, joining the industry in 2005. Would you say you're a "cable guy" now?** It's humbling. In terms of years, I'm old, but in terms of my time in the industry, I guess I'm relatively young. I do think of myself as a cable guy and I'm proud of it. It's one reason I made the shift from NCTA to Comcast. I wanted to not just represent this great industry, but really be part of it. I'm still learning. It's why I keep doing this. It's home for me.

Merger Watch: The FCC Media Bureau set up a pleading cycle that takes into account **Tribune** and **Nexstar's** plans to divest certain stations to **Scripps**, **Tegna** and **Circle City Broadcasting** as part of their proposed merger. The broadcasters said the divestitures will bring Nexstar below the 39% national ownership cap—just barely at 38.2965%. Petitions to deny are due at the FCC May 27, with oppositions to petitions due June 11 and replies due June 18. In Indianapolis, Nexstar is acquiring two existing top-four stations from Tribune. Nexstar wants permission to keep those stations while divesting its existing stations in that market.

Speed Quest: Cox began testing this week in Phoenix a service dedicated to reducing the lag and latency gamers can experience while playing. First reported by **Variety**, the service, dubbed "Cox Elite Gamer," would use software to connect users to gaming servers more quickly, enhancing the overall experience. It's not an internet service in itself, but instead an optional add-on. Cox made it clear that this is not an example of the paid "fast lanes" that net neutrality supporters claimed would appear after the FCC repealed Title II. A Cox spokesperson said the provider is not managing, prioritizing or throttling any traffic on its broadband internet service network as part of the service. Because it does not alter speeds in any way or prioritize traffic, it would be allowed under the former regulatory environment. The service is a white-labeled version of **wtfast**, a system for US gamers that uses machine learning to automatically select an optimized traffic path for a gaming connection. The trial service will run for approximately three months, after which Cox will decide whether to offer it on a wider scale. Consumers must live in Cox's Arizona service area and have 100 Mbps internet speeds or faster. Cox Elite Gamer is available for \$14.99/month and includes two licenses. Each additional license is \$4.99/month.

Two Shots at Victory: Following the filing of its most recent patent infringement complaint against **Comcast**, **Rovi/TiVo** has filed the same complaint in the **US International Trade Commission**. The patents in the complaint related to Com-

Cablefax: What's Happening... April & May

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EDITORIAL:	Amy Maclean Sara Winegardner Mollie Cahillane	• amaclean@accessintel.com • swinegardner@accessintel.com • mcahillane@accessintel.com
ADVERTISING:	Olivia Murray	• omurray@accessintel.com
AWARDS:	Mary-Lou French	• mfrench@accessintel.com

		Awards	Events
APRIL	<p>NAB Show Cablefax will preview and cover the hottest trends, panel discussions and show floor action at this massive annual gathering of the TV and broadcast industry.</p> <p>Customer Experience In a crowded marketplace, smart providers know that to stand out they must create the ultimate customer experience. This report examines what's working and what isn't when it comes to both traditional distribution and direct-to-consumer offerings.</p> <p>CFX Leaders Retreat Join us at this exclusive, off-the-record executive retreat designed to generate in-depth discussions on industry challenges and opportunities, leaving participants with actionable ideas to take back to the office.</p> <p>Cablefax: The Magazine – April Issue The Work Culture List *NEW* Cablefax: The Magazine's newest issue shines a spotlight on top employers who are making waves in areas such as veteran hiring, continuing education and diversity.</p>	<p>The FAXIES Entry Deadline: April 12 Final Deadline: April 26</p>	<p>CFX Leaders Retreat April 29-30</p>
MAY	<p>Cable Center Cable Hall of Fame & WICT Signature Luncheon Cablefax will provide the lowdown on this year's honorees and all the details surrounding these annual must-attend events.</p> <p>The Year Was 1979... It was a pivotal year for the industry that included the creation of WICT, ESPN, USA Network. Cablefax looks at what made this such a key year for the industry and how it has changed over the past four decades.</p> <p>The Gatekeepers A series of Q&As with MVPD programming and technology gatekeepers.</p>		

cast's X1 platform include features such as the X1 Sports App, multi-room DVR features and set-top box app integrations.

Pay Day: Comcast CEO Brian Roberts earned a bump in total compensation for 2018, while NBCU CEO Steve Burke's earnings took a hit. In 2018, Roberts saw \$35mln in compensation (including a \$10.7mln performance bonus and more than \$10mln in stock options and awards), according to an SEC filing. In 2017, Robert's total comp was \$32.5mln. Burke's earnings fell by more than \$6mln in 2018, bringing in \$39.9mln, down from \$46.5mln. He earned a \$10mln performance bonus and more than \$10mln in stock options and awards. In both 2016 and 2017, Burke received a \$15.3mln bonus. CFO Michael Cavanagh pulled in \$21.7mln and Comcast Cable chief David Watson took home \$14.7mln.

Programming: Lifetime will debut a two-hour follow-up special to January's "Surviving R. Kelly." Hosted by journalist Soledad O'Brien, "Surviving R. Kelly: The Impact" airs May 4 at 10pm and will dive into how it changed the conversation surrounding sexual violence. -- Cinedigm's digital networks CONtv and Docurama are now available on Comcast's X1 platform. The nets can be added for \$4.99 and \$2.99 a month, respectively. -- Disney Channel will preview "Just Roll With It" on June 14 at 9:45pm before its official premiere on June 19 at 8pm. The series blends improv comedy with a family sitcom.

Cablefax Dashboard

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Up Ahead

April 28-30: Cablefax Leaders Retreat; Key Largo, FL

May 1-2: BCAP Cable Academy; Pocono Manor, PA

May 2: Cable Center Hall of Fame and WICT Signature Lunch; NYC

May 7-8: CTAM Communication Strategies Course; NYC

June 4: 2019 Promax Conference

June 6: Cablefax Celebration of Leadership Gala; NYC

Research

- US OTT access revenue grew to \$16.3bln (+37%) in 2018, based on information from 66 OTT providers.
- For US cable, satellite and telco TV access (not including OTT), revenue fell to \$102.4bln (-3%).
- 2.85mln US residential broadband subscribers were added in the year, but the story was different in cable. Estimates show a decline of 4.013mln US TV subscribers, up from the decline of 3.661mln reported in 2017.

(Source: [Convergence Research Group](#))

Quotable

"You're going to need mmWave, you're going to need mid-bands, you're going to need low-band spectrum... mmWave can play well in those dense urban environments. But it doesn't solve the 5G story, especially not in the 3mln-plus square miles of the US, and that's where the need for mid- and low-band spectrum comes in... It's way more economical to deploy mid-band 5G spectrum on an existing cell grid then it is to try and deploy hundreds of thousands of mmWave small cells to give you some form of contiguous coverage and experience. -- **T-Mobile evp/CTO Neville Ray** on the company's 1Q19 earnings call

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